**The Palestinians were never removed from their homes in 1947-48 , Israel did not have this intention, they left all because of the horrors of war?**

It is basically a famous Israeli Historian,(Benny Morris)'s argument that **Palestinians were not removed from their homes in 1947-48 due to Israeli intentions and instead left due to the horrors of war is flawed for several reasons**.

Following are his premises for this argument with their rebuttal by Norman Finkelstein.

Disregard for Arab Testimonies: Morris tends to dismiss Arab testimonies or qualify them with skepticism, implying a bias against accepting Arab perspectives.

Contradictory Evidence: Morris's own findings indicate that there was a desire among some Israeli leaders for the Arab population to flee, as it would serve their strategic interests. For example, the sniping incidents and bombings aimed to create conditions for population displacement.

Plan D and Expulsions: Morris acknowledges the existence of Plan D, which aimed to clear potentially hostile forces from the territory of the Jewish state. This plan provided a strategic and ideological basis for expulsions carried out by Israeli commanders at various levels.

Statements by Israeli Leaders: Statements by key Israeli figures such as David Ben-Gurion reveal support for

**Selective Use of Sources:** Morris primarily relies on Israeli archival materials, often uncritically, despite acknowledging their potential for misrepresentation due to political censorship. He tends to be more cautious with Arab sources, undermining their credibility by attributing a penchant for exaggeration to them.

Finkelstein:

“Morris bases his studies on Israeli archival materials, many of which have only recently become available, and the standard semi-official accounts of the war.10 While these sources can provide much valuable information, the uncritical manner in which Morris handles them casts some serious doubts on his conclusions. Indeed, Morris himself has in recent years warned against a naive reliance on such materials. Documenting extensive misrepresentation in official Zionist publications on the matter of transfer (cf. note 52 below), Morris writes: **The speeches, debates, diaries and memoranda that the Zionist bureaucrats issued wholesale passed through the sieve of political censorship on the way to publication; a large portion disappeared or were distorted. … Historians and students using those sources would do well to employ a large measure of caution.**

Revealingly, Morris is much more cautious in his handling of the few Arab sources he cites. The testimony of an Arab witness to a massacre is parenthetically qualified with the phrase ‘he alleged’

Actually, if we are to believe Morris, Arab sources are generally not to be trusted, given the ‘Arab penchant for exaggeration’.”

**Contradictory Evidence:** Morris himself acknowledges instances where Palestinians were ordered to leave by the IDF, contradicting the notion that their departure was solely due to the horrors of war. He also concedes that broadcasts from Arab leaders urged Palestinians to remain in place, suggesting that their departure wasn't always voluntary.

Finkelstein:

“[It was] Morris’s own finding that a strong desire to see the population … flee already existed[in Israelis]: **the [sniping] seemed to offer the justification and opportunity for what the bombings and artillery barrages [which preceded Lydda’s occupation] … had in the main failed to achieve. (Birth, p. 207).**

Similarly, Morris documents that, contrary to the self-serving accounts of a local IDF officer and an official of a neighboring kibbutz, the villagers of Beit Naqquba did not flee at the behest of Arab orders but were ordered to leave by the IDF.

**Morris (Birth):The lack of AHC and Husayni orders, appeals or broadcasts against the departure during the following week-long Haifa exodus indicates that Husayni and the AHC did not dissent from their supporters’ decision…..They did not appeal to the Palestinian masses to leave, but neither, in April, did they demand that the Palestinians stay put**.

Such equivocation is not warranted by the evidence, however. Throughout March and April 1948, the broadcasts of the AHC and neighboring Arab countries were consistently urging the Palestinians to remain in place.21 Indeed, Morris himself observes that, as early as December 1947, these broadcasts were instructing Palestinians to ‘stay put and fight’.

Morris has contrived an equally untenable theory – namely, that the Arab leaders ‘perhaps’ encouraged the Palestinian exodus to justify an invasion of the nascent Jewish state. Yet, as Mary C. Wilson observes in King Abdullah: Britain and the Making of Jordan, the massive flight of Palestinian Arabs came as a very unwelcome surprise to the Arab states, which had hitherto sought to ‘shield their inactivity behind the ineffectual Arab Liberation Army’ but were now subjected to intense popular pressure to ‘move towards direct involvement’.

Interestingly, Morris himself undercuts his novel theory, reporting that (1) ‘already in’ February 1948 King Abdullah was – in the words of the British High Commissioner for Palestine – ‘complain[ing] about the exodus of Palestine Arabs into Transjordan [saying] … they were all arriving thoroughly anti-British and, hence, might give him trouble’.”

**Evidence of Expulsion:** Morris admits that a significant number of Palestinian refugees were systematically expelled from their homes, challenging the idea that their displacement was purely incidental to the conflict. This raises questions about the intentions and actions of Zionist forces regarding the Arab population.

“Yet, in a note to Birth, Morris suggests a rather significant qualification of this view: **The word ‘expelled’ was often used rather loosely by Israelis in 1948. It was quite often assumed by non-witnesses that a given community had been expelled when in fact it had left before Israeli forces arrived. The desire to see the Arabs leave often triggered the assumption that commanders – who it was presumed shared this desire – had to act overtly and directly to obtain this result, when this had not been the case. But if denial of the right to return was a form of ‘expulsion’, then a great many villagers … who had waited near their villages for the battle to die down before trying to return home – can be considered ‘expellees’.**

Thus, Morris agrees that, in at least one crucial sense, ‘a great many’ Palestinian refugees were systematically expelled from their homes. This then raises the questions of whether the Zionists intended that the Arabs flee from their homes and whether they acted in a manner consonant with this intention. If the answer to these two questions is also in the affirmative, then it becomes impossible to sustain Morris’s thesis that the refugee problem was ‘born of war, not by design’. One could maintain that, given the armed hostilities, the Zionists had no alternative except to expel the indigenous Arab population; but one could not still maintain that the Arab flight was an unintended or unanticipated ‘by product’ of the war.

Morris cites a British report on the conference of Arab prime ministers in December 1947, in which the Arab view of Zionist ambitions was summarized as follows**: The ultimate aim of all the Zionists was ‘the acquisition of all of Palestine, all Transjordan and possibly some tracts in Southern Lebanon and Southern Syria’. The Zionist ‘politicians’, after taking control of the country, would at first treat the Arabs ‘nicely’. But then, once feeling ‘strong enough’, they would begin ‘squeezing the Arab population off their lands … [and] if necessary, out of the State’. Later, they would expand the Jewish state at the expense of the Palestinian Arab state. However, the more militant Haganah commanders wished to move more quickly. … Exploiting the weakness and disorganization of the Arabs, they would first render them – especially in Jaffa and Haifa – ‘completely powerless’ and then frighten or force them into leaving, ‘their places being taken by Jewish immigrants’. The Arab leaders … thought that there existed a still more extreme Jewish plan, of the Revisionists, calling for more immediate expansion. (Birth, p. 24).**

Morris**:(1) April–May 1948 witnessed ‘the main wave of the Arab exodus’; (2) the Arab exodus was ‘not the result of a general, predetermined Yishuv policy’; and (3) the Arab exodus during these months ‘caught the Yishuv leadership, including the authors of Plan D, by surprise’. April—May 1948 witnessed ‘the main wave of the Arab exodus’.**

Yet, Morris’s periodization obscures the fact that Israel’s statehood declaration was actually the watershed date. In the weeks immediately preceding 14 May, the Zionist leadership was especially sensitive to international pressure because of threats (emanating particularly from the United States) to rescind or modify the Partition Resolution. This concern for world public opinion acted to some extent as a brake on Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Palestinian Arabs.”

**Zionist Intentions:** Historical records show that Zionist leaders, including David Ben-Gurion, expressed support for the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs even before the 1948 war began. Ben-Gurion's statements and actions suggest a deliberate policy of population transfer to create a Jewish-majority state.

“The Yishuv military leadership formulated in early March and began implementing in April Plan Dalet to cope with the anticipated Arab offensives. The ‘essence’ of Plan D **was the clearing of hostile and potentially hostile forces out of the interior of the prospective territory of the Jewish State. … As the Arab irregulars were based and quartered in the villages, and as the militias of many villages were participating in the anti-Yishuv hostilities, the Haganah regarded most of the villages as actively or potentially hostile. (Birth, p. 62, my emphasis; cf. Birth, pp. 113, 128–9).**

In short, Plan D constituted – and here I am quoting Morris – ‘a strategic ideological anchor and basis for expulsions by front, district, brigade and battalion commanders … and it gave commanders, post facto, a formal, persuasive covering note to explain their actions’ (Birth, p. 63; cf. Birth: pp. 113, 157).25 I do not see how the above admissions can be reconciled with Morris’s claim that there existed no General Staff ‘“plan” or policy decision’ to ‘expel “the Arabs” from the Jewish State’s areas’ (Birth, p. 289).

And again: ‘**The doctrinal underpinning of Plan D was taken for granted by the majority of the Haganah commanders. … The gloves had to be, and were, taken off’ (Birth, p. 113). And yet again: It was understood by all concerned that, militarily, in the struggle to survive, the less Arabs remaining behind and along the front lines, the better and, politically, the less Arabs remaining in the Jewish State, the better. At each level of command and execution, Haganah officers in those April-May days when the fate of the State hung in balance, simply ‘understood’ what the military and political exigencies of survival required. (Birth, p. 289).**

[In Haifa] the Carmeli Brigade was ordered to ‘kill every [adult] male encountered’ and to attack with firebombs ‘all objectives that can be set alight’ (Birth, pp. 76–7). According to Morris, ‘clearly th[e] offensive, and especially the mortaring which took place during the morning of 22 April, precipitated the mass exodus’ (Birth, p. 85; 1948, p. 21).”

**Ben-Gurion's Reaction:** Ben-Gurion's reported comments during the expulsion of Arabs from Haifa, expressing satisfaction at the sight of fleeing Palestinians, further indicate a deliberate policy rather than a response to the exigencies of war.

“Watching the Arabs flee, Ben-Gurion, who visited the city on 1 May, reportedly exclaimed, ‘What a beautiful sight!’ (Palumbo, p. 76). Learning that one Zionist official in the city was trying to persuade the Arabs to stay, **Ben Gurion remarked,** ‘**Doesn’t he have anything more important to do?’** (Birth, p. 328, note 4).

Morris reports that, as far back as the late 1930s, Ben-Gurion repeatedly and forthrightly expressed his support – at meetings as well as in private correspondence and diary entries – for the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs: **I support compulsory transfer. I don’t see in it anything immoral’.**

Indeed, ‘already in November 1947, a few days before the UN partition resolution, Ben-Gurion was thinking in terms of a “transfer” solution to the prospective Jewish state’s Arab problem’. Hence, he advised giving the Arabs of the future Jewish state citizenship in the future Arab state so as to facilitate their expulsion in the likely event of war. Then, as the Palestinians first began to flee before the Zionist assaults during the early days of the war in December 1947, Ben-Gurion grasped that the moment was at hand to implement transfer. Morris writes**: With a little nudging, with a limited expulsion here and the razing of a village there, and with a policy of military conquest usually preceded by mortar barrages, this trickle of an exodus, he realized, could be turned into a massive outflow. (Tikkun, p. 82)”**

All this clearly shows that the argument under discussion here bears very little weight (if not weightless)**.**