

“Gaza and the Ongoing Nakba”, Dr. Leena Dallasheh, Independent Scholar, 23.6.2025

Introduction

Welcome to the second lecture in our daily series, “Eyes on Gaza”—a gathering that brings together protest and education. Our guest today is Dr. Leena Dallasheh, a historian of Palestine and Israel, with a particular focus on the history of the Palestinians of 1948. She is also a committed activist, working tirelessly for justice in Palestine and beyond. Today, she will speak with us about Gaza and the ongoing Nakba. Leena will talk for about eight minutes, after which we will leave time for a short discussion. To keep things efficient, if you'd like to ask a question, feel free to write it in the Chat—I'll read it out to Leena after her talk. Welcome, Leena, and thank you so much for being here with us.

Lecture

Thank you, Ayelet, and thank you all for being here. And thank you for this initiative.

I believe it is absolutely critical to keep talking about Gaza—especially now. But let me take us back for a moment, to the beginning of the Zionist movement, which from its inception was a settler-colonial project aiming to establish a Jewish political entity in Palestine at the expense of the Indigenous Palestinian population. It found a strong ally in British colonialism, which helped to consolidate its position during the two decades in which the Zionist movement displaced tens of thousands of Palestinian villagers and expanded Jewish settlement. This process engrained the ideology of population transfer among Zionist leaders, who saw it as a solution to what they called the “demographic imbalance” and to Palestinian resistance—for Palestinians refused to accept their displacement and marginalization in their own homeland.

In the 1948 war, Zionism seized the opportunity to radically reshape Palestine's demographic and geographic reality. The State of Israel was born on the ruins of Palestinian society. This was their Nakba: 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes, and over 500 villages and towns were destroyed. Israel acted swiftly to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees and built Jewish settlements on their lands. The conquest of historic Palestine was completed in 1967 with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the expulsion of nearly 240,000 more Palestinians. Since then, Palestinians have been living through an ongoing Nakba. Today, millions of Palestinians still live in exile. Millions more live under brutal Israeli occupation and the relentless expansion of settlements. And even the nearly two million Palestinian citizens of Israel—who enjoy certain rights not granted to others—are systematically discriminated against, marginalized, and threatened.

But since the horrific crimes committed by Hamas on October 7, the ongoing Nakba has entered a new and devastating phase—surpassing even the scope of 1948 and 1967. Israel is systematically destroying life in Gaza and waging a ceaseless, murderous war against its population. It is not just the nearly 58,000 people who have been directly killed. The actual toll—when we include those who have died from malnutrition, lack of medical care, unsafe water, and sanitation—is many times higher. And we will only know the full number once the massacre ends.

Israel has also systematically destroyed Gaza's education and healthcare systems, including all its universities, along with infrastructure and homes. More than 60 percent of Gaza's buildings have

been damaged or destroyed. Entire areas—such as Rafah and Beit Lahia—have been almost completely wiped out. About 90 percent of Gaza’s population has been displaced and is now on the move, constantly relocated by Israeli forces. Nearly 83 percent of the Gaza Strip is now designated as a military zone under Israeli evacuation orders. The scale of devastation far exceeds the Nakba of 1948, and Israel’s appetite for destruction seems far from satisfied.

At this point, I want to stress something: while we speak of an “ongoing Nakba”, it’s important not to overlook the qualitative shift we are witnessing. Despite the continuity, we are now seeing a horrifying escalation. The loss of life and the scale of damage to Palestinian life today represent a new, unprecedented level of violence. And with that, the discourse of “transfer,” which had faded somewhat from Israeli mainstream rhetoric, has returned in full force. The idea of expelling Gaza’s population has become increasingly normalized—even before Trump’s “Gaza Riviera” plan. This is not just rhetoric. As Prof. Gadi Algazi recently emphasized, the planned expulsion of Gaza’s population is already underway. Anyone looking at the current map of Gaza—with all its security zones and the tiny area to which Palestinians have been pushed—can see the picture clearly.

This ideology of transfer does not stop at Gaza. Even as we speak, the campaign of ethnic cleansing is accelerating. Just this week, there was an urgent call to action as the Israeli army approved training exercises inside live-fire zones. Since October 2023, 29 communities in Area C of the West Bank have already been displaced. Settlers are intensifying their terror campaigns and boasting of their success, while the government continues to approve and legalize more and more settlements—explicitly aiming to push Palestinians out of Area C and beyond. Even Palestinian citizens of Israel face expulsion rhetoric, legal threats of citizenship revocation, deportation, and administrative detention.

And now, as the world’s attention shifts toward a potential war with Iran, we must be even more vigilant in monitoring what is happening to those resisting the ongoing Nakba—an increasingly brutal one. Every day, Israel kills more Palestinians—especially those waiting in line for food, but not only them—as the siege and mass starvation continue in Gaza. The threats of expulsion and displacement grow larger—not just in Gaza, but also across the West Bank. We must ensure that this Nakba—this ongoing and repeated Nakba—does not pass in silence. Our voices and our protest must be heard. And perhaps, they must go beyond words.