

Empathy Forgotten

1. Introduction

It is disheartening to witness the repeated cycle of violence and destruction fueled by anger and fear in the Holy Land. Empathy is forgotten.

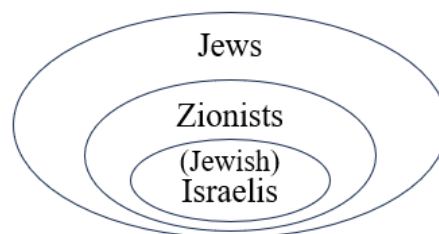
In a video message last December, Abp. Kikuchi shared his experience during his visit to Jerusalem in 2000. He mentioned that his Palestinian friend took him to a house in Israeli-controlled West Jerusalem and showed him a tree there. His friend's grandparents planted the tree when his father was born in 1947, and the house used to belong to them. His friend claimed that only the restoration of the status quo ante before 1947 could bring an end to the conflict.¹

This episode shows the conflict is contemporary and secular. The seizure of Palestinian inhabitants' land or properties has ruined their lives and is still ongoing in Palestine and Israel. It also highlights that the conflict is not between Jews and Muslims but between Zionist Israelis and traditional inhabitants: it is not a clash of religions, but a consequence of driving people off their land. Like the Archbishop's episode, my teacher of Arabic at a previous job was a Christian expelled from Jerusalem. A Christian colleague of mine with whom I worked closely was also forced to leave Jerusalem.

This note does not delve into these political complexities. Instead, it attempts to review the background and explore what might be forgotten when perpetuating and even intensifying this cycle of state-to-state violence.

2. Jews and their subsets

Subsets of "Jews" may be helpful to clarify critical issues of to the ongoing tragedies. The diagram below illustrates Jewish subsets.



Zionists are included in (a subset of) Jews. Jewish Israelis are for the most part included in (a subset of) Zionists.²

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etIJCXHQTkQ>

² There are many Israelis who work for reconciliation with Palestinians and oppose land seizure.

Jews, or the Jewish people, are an ethnic group and nation descended from the Judaic-believing Israelites of the ancient Near East. About 15.1 million Jews lived worldwide in 2021, with 6.8 million in the State of Israel (45%), 6 million in the United States (40%), and 2.3 million elsewhere (15%).³ They are divided into various groups, including Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Most Ashkenazim Jews are from Southern Europe and Eastern Europe, while Sephardim are originally Spanish/Portuguese Jews. At least 70% of modern Jews are Ashkenazi.

Zionists are Jews who support Zionism, which has evolved into a national movement that aims to establish Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel and repatriate the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland. Nathan Birnbaum, an Austro-Hungarian journalist, introduced the term "Zionism" in 1890, and Theodor Herzl, another journalist from Austria-Hungary, established Zionism as a political movement in 1897. The term was expanded following the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. Now, it includes "support for the country's defense and development, including the Israel Defense Forces."⁴ The term "development" here implies the establishment of new Jewish settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. ("Expanded Zionism")

"Jewish Israelis" refers to the Jewish citizens of the State of Israel. At the end of 2023, they comprised 73.2% of the state population, while Arab Israelis and other groups accounted for 21.1% and 5.7% of the population, respectively.⁵ Israelis in this note specifically refer to Jewish Israelis unless stated otherwise. Most Jewish Israelis are believed to support the Expanded Zionism.

There are or were Zionists who have been critical of the policies of the government of the State of Israel (SOI) about Expanded Zionism. We can refer to them as "non-SOI Zionists." Some of the notable figures who fall under this category include Nahum Goldmann,⁶ who was the founder and president of the World Jewish Congress and the president of the World Zionist Organization, and Sir Gerald Kaufman,⁷ who was a UK MP and minister.

3. The Aliyahs - Jewish Migration to Palestine

Jewish migration has created the State of Israel. Modern Jewish migration to Palestine, known as Aliyah, began in the 19th century. The way it has happened may be the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both sides exchanged anger and reproduced tragedy. Furthermore, Israel required more and more immigrants and accommodated them to ensure its survival in increasingly hostile environments.

Aliyah comprises, in general, two categories of migration. The initial category is voluntary Zionist migration that was motivated ideologically, culturally, or economically. The belief in

³ Dashefsky, Arnold; Della-Pergola, Sergio; Sheskin, Ira, eds. (2021). World Jewish Population. Available at <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/api/download/?studyId=1185&mediaId=bjdb%5>

⁴ Zionism: A Definition of Zionism. (n.d.) *Jewish Virtual Library*. Retrieved from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/a-definition-of-zionism>

⁵ Vital Statistics: Latest Population Statistics for Israel. (February 5, 2024). *Jewish Virtual Library*. Retrieved from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/latest-population-statistics-for-israel>

⁶ Goldmann, N. (1970). The Future of Israel. *Foreign Affairs*, 48(3), 443–459. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20039455>

⁷ Wilson, T. Gerald Kaufman speech. YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWe8gRoIEJk&t=60s>

the coming of a messiah and his just rule in the Land of Israel is said to be a core tenet for religious Jews and a significant aspect of Jewish culture for secular Jews. In the past, Jewish immigration was often motivated by economic difficulties. Many Jews in Europe were on the periphery of economies. They were vulnerable to economic downturns, which often led to anti-semitic sentiment, if not pogroms or other acts of violence. However, nowadays, Israel's technology sector is attracting middle-class and skilled Jews from affluent countries such as the US and France who are seeking to upscale their quality of life.⁸

The second category of Aliyahs refers to the involuntary migration of Jews to Palestine due to political or religious persecution against them. Many Jews who were persecuted for their faith in Europe (including England, France, Austria, and Spain) settled in Palestine between the 13th and 15th centuries. In modern times, Political persecution of Jews emerged in Arab countries in response to the State of Israel's forced displacement of Palestinian inhabitants, known as the *Nakba*, in 1948. This resulted in a massive Jewish exodus from Middle Eastern countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt during the 1950s and 1960s.

These distinctions may be too simplistic. Voluntary cases in history often had some involuntary factors behind them, and the reasons behind such migrations could be multifaceted.

Jewish settlements in Palestine transformed from religious communes in the 19th century to ideological movements after the late 19th century and to state political power after the declaration of the State of Israel. Also, Politics in Europe and the United States treated Jews unjustly before the establishment of the State of Israel. Their migration occurred in several waves with varying numbers of migrants and countries of origin: the First Aliyah (1882-1903), the Second Aliyah (1904-14), the Third Aliyah (1919-23), the Fourth Aliyah (1924-29), and the Fifth Aliyah (1929-39). In the early growth of the Jewish population, immigrants from Russia played a significant role. The first Aliyah aimed for social justice and Jewish labor, while the second and third Aliyah fused Zionism and Socialism, establishing agricultural settlements and political parties. The fourth and fifth Aliyahs, mainly Polish Jews, aimed to maintain urban, middle-class life.⁹

Over time, the Jewish population in Palestine grew in number and as a percentage of the total Palestinian population, from 15,011 (3.2% of 462,465) in 1879 to 630,000 (about 32.0% of 1,970,400) in 1947 and 7,208,000 (73.2% of 9,842,000) in 2023.¹⁰ Early statistics from different sources are not always consistent and reliable, but the whole statistics all point to fast growth driven by migration.

⁸ Wainer, D., and Benmeleh, Y. (2015-01-22). Israel Gains With Influx of French Jewish Entrepreneurs. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20150216180930/http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-22/israel-gains-as-france-loses-entrepreneurs-among-persecuted-jews>; Schwartzapfel, Beth (2010-03-02). Not Just Zionism: Lousy Economy Pushes More U.S. Jews to Move to Israel. *Haaretz*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20120707184354/http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/2.209/not-just-zionism-lousy-economy-pushes-more-u-s-jews-to-move-to-israel-1.263995>

⁹ Rafael, E. B., & Sharot, S. (2009). *Ethnicity, religion and class in Israeli society*. Cambridge University Press. pp.26-27

¹⁰ Vital Statistics: Latest Population Statistics for Israel. (February 5, 2024). Jewish Virtual Library. Retrieved from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/latest-population-statistics-for-israel>

Jewish migration to Palestine was often met with Palestinian resistance. To defend Jewish settlements, Zionists formed a series of Jewish paramilitary organizations: The Bar-Giora group (1904-1909), the Hashomer (1909-1920), and the Hagah (1920-1948). They militarily suppressed Palestinian resistance. The Hagah served as a foundation of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

After 1948, Jewish immigration to Palestine continued under state sponsorship. Israel requires an increased number of immigrants to ensure its survival in hostile environments. Between 1948 and 1951, Israel saw a significant wave of immigration, primarily from post-Holocaust Europe and the Arab and Muslim world. This caused the Jewish population of Israel to double in only three and a half years.¹¹

Around 900,000 Jews left Arab countries and became refugees. An estimated 650,000 of these Jews settled in Israel.¹² These Jewish refugees were innocent victims of Arab people's wrath against Israel's massive dislocation and displacement of Palestinian inhabitants following the *Nakba*. This exemplified a destructive reciprocal exchange of anger and a negative reproduction of tragedy in the conflict.

From 1970 to 1988, a total of 291,000 Soviet Jews were granted exit visas, with 165,000 moving to Israel.¹³ Additionally, from 1948 to 1989 and from 1990 to 2011, about 23,000 and 41,000 French Jews immigrated to Israel, respectively.¹⁴ Nowadays, more than 200,000 North American immigrants live in Israel.¹⁵

4. Palestinian state

In modern times, the control over the territory and people shifted from the Ottoman Empire (the 16th century to 1920) to the United Kingdom (1920-1948). From 1915 to 1916, the Arab people were promised Arab independence in the region through the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence. However, this promise was betrayed by the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Subsequently, the Arab people were compelled to challenge both the Zionists and the British in the British Mandate administration. A United Nations resolution 181 (II) in 1947, which in Palestine most Jews accepted but Arabs rejected, proposed a partition of the territory between independent Israeli and Arab states. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the

¹¹ Kaplan, J. (2015-04-27). The Mass Migration of the 1950s. *The Jewish Agency*. Retrieved from <https://archive.jewishagency.org/society-and-politics/content/36566/>

¹² Beker, A. (2005). THE FORGOTTEN NARRATIVE: JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB COUNTRIES. *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 17(3/4), 3–19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25834637>

¹³ Tolts, M. (2009, August 2-6) *Post-Soviet Aliyah and Jewish Demographic Transformation* [Paper presentation]. The 15th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20131105203728/http://bjpa.org/Publications/downloadPublication.cfm?PublicationID=11924>

¹⁴ *Immigrants francophones arrivés en Israël selon le lieu de naissance - 1919 Ã 1989, & Immigrants francophones arrivés en Israël selon le lieu de provenance - 1990 Ã 2010*. www.terredisrael.com La voix des israéliens francophones. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20120506073516/http://www.terredisrael.com/ISRAEL_ALYA1.php

¹⁵ Berman, D. (2008, Jan 23). Need an Appointment at the U.S. Embassy Get on Line!. *Haaretz*. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/need-an-appointment-at-the-u-s-embassy-get-on-line-1.237816>

territorial occupations, annexations, and disengagements by Israel, Egypt, and Jordan have further complicated the lives of the Palestinian people.

As the State of Israel was established, Egypt and Jordan occupied the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 1948, respectively. After the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, claiming East Jerusalem as its capital. In 1988, Jordan renounced West Bank territorial claims in favor of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Following the Oslo Accords in 1993, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) under Fatah, the successor authority of the PLO, secured Areas A and B in the West Bank, while the rest (Area C) remained under Israeli control. Areas A and B are comprised of 167 enclaves (167 islands in a Jewish Sea), slashing the unity of Palestinian lives. After Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, Hamas, a Palestinian Sunni Islamist movement, took over Gaza from Fatah in the 2007 election. The Palestinian administration is now split between the West Bank under Fatah and Gaza under Hamas.

5. Displaced Palestinians

Palestinians’ suffering transcends the piecemeal West Bank and overcrowded Gaza. Forcefully Displaced Palestinians are also under hardship. They include internally displaced Palestinians (IDPs), Palestinian refugees, and Palestinian diasporas. Jewish settlers’ continued seizure of land in the West Bank (the Expanded Zionism), Israel’s wars with Arab countries, and battles between Palestinian militia and other Arabs caused Palestinians to flee or to be expelled from their towns and villages. They have been displaced into refugee camps and neighboring Arab countries. Israel does not allow IDPs to return to their homes.

Forcibly displaced Palestinians, including their descendants, are estimated at 9.17 million or 65.5 % of the entire Palestinian population of 14 million at the end of 2021. The wars between 1947 and 1949 (the *Nakba*) and in 1967 (the *Naksa*) massively created Palestinian refugees. The *Nakba* refugees (1948 refugees) were 7,028,000, of which 5,808,000 were registered with the UNRWA¹⁶ and 1,220,000 were not registered with the UNRWA. The *Naksa* refugees (1967 refugees) numbered 1,331,000 at the end of 2021. The total IDPs, including their descendants, created by the wars between 1947 and 1949 and in 1967 were 812,000, of which the *Nakba* IDPs (1948 IDPs) were 439,000, and the *Naksa* IDPs (1967 IDPs) were 373,000 at the end of 2021.¹⁷ The following table summarizes these numbers.

Palestinian Refugees and IDPs at the end of 2021

UNRWA Registered 1948 Refugees	Unregistered 1948 Refugees	1967 Refugees	1948 IDPs	1967 IDPs	Total
5,808,000	1,220,000	1,331,000	439,000	373,000	9,171,000

Source: Al-Azza, N. (Ed.) (2022) p.42. Figures are rounded to thousands.

The historic ingathering of Jewish exiles has been accompanied by the creation of Palestinian diasporas. Palestinian diasporas range from one million to five million, depending on how to

¹⁶ The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

¹⁷ For all statistics in this paragraph, Al-Azza, N. (Ed.) (2022) Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, 2019-2021 Vol X. Bethlehem, Palestine. BADIL Resource Center. p.42. Retrieved from https://www.badil.org/cached_uploads/view/2022/10/31/survey2021-eng-1667209836.pdf

count.¹⁸ More than one million Palestinians live in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Chile. Palestinian refugees residing in UNRWA refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are about 1.8 million.¹⁹ Jordan is also estimated to host about 1.7 million Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship.

6. Foreign Involvement

It is well known that this ongoing conflict has inevitably involved foreign governments, making peace achievement complex. The involvement continues today.

European governments have traditionally been supporting Israel allegedly because of guilt over their past treatment of Jews. Also, the Jewish lobby has been influential.

The US has also been a notable supporter of Israel. The Jewish lobby, which is the largest outside Israel and holds considerable influence on US society and politics, is primarily responsible for this support. Some argue that US hegemony in the Middle East is another factor. The US sought and still seeks counterforces against the communist Soviet Union, Nasserite radicalism, Islamic fundamentalism,²⁰ and other regional forces unfriendly to it.

Interestingly, one of the most influential lobbies in the US, Christian evangelicals, support the SOI because of their apocalyptic beliefs.²¹ In contrast, other denominations, such as Anglicans and Catholics, have been providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians.

The involvement of Arabs appears to be more cultural, political, and economic than religious. The Aliyahs, apart from the Jewish immigrants' intention, caused the irreversible destruction of hundreds or thousands of Palestinian villages and towns, which suddenly deprived Palestinians of their traditional way of life. This also made them witness the suffering of the displaced Palestinians. The massive influx of Palestinian refugees and diasporas posed a threat to the fragile, non-industrial economies of neighboring Arab nations. Anti-colonial sentiment led Arabs to side with the Soviet bloc, challenging US hegemony. Iran's involvement in the matter is also largely political.

7. Political Leadership and People

The endless cycle of bloodshed causes me to question the leadership in Israel and Palestine, though self-serving leadership is not unique to this conflict.

Isn't the political leadership responsible for the well-being of all of its people in this conflict? Shouldn't they be accountable for the consequences of their politically aggressive agenda on

¹⁸ The author estimated the numbers based on data from Review of "Palestinians Worldwide, A Demographic Study" (2020) Abuhamer 2021 (Abuamer, 2021), Jewish Virtual Library (Jewish Virtual Library, 2021), and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2022), which were quoted in MAṬOI, E. An Outlook on Palestinian Refugees at the End of 2023. Middle East Political and Economic Institute. Retrieved from <https://mepei.com/an-outlook-on-palestinian-refugees-at-theend-of-2023/>.

¹⁹ Al-Azza, N. (Ed.) (2022). P.47

²⁰ Montefiore, S. S. (2012). Jerusalem: The biography. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. p.604

²¹ Montefiore, S. S. (2012). p.604.

the people they govern? Don't people often unknowingly accept the goals set by their political and professional leadership?

Continuous belligerence may save political leaders' skin – for a time. It may enable political leaders to maintain their positions of power in their home countries' politics. Being a leader may be their hidden or unconscious desire rather than leading people to peace.

On the other hand, many Israeli and Palestinian people may intrinsically possess flexibility and compassion towards others for being peaceful. They and we could be “Samaritans.”

8. Fear, Anger, Hatred and Joy

Israelis, most of whom are much more affluent than Palestinians, are living in self-inflicted fear. Their military might in the region and its use invites revenge. They may lose a relatively comfortable life. They may be deprived of lives and properties, as they have done for Palestinians. They must protect themselves endlessly.

Violence creates anger in victims. Anger may prompt the victims to seek revenge for current and future protection. Fear and anger endlessly reinforce fear and anger.

Better protection requires more people. Israel needs more immigrants and more land for them. Israelis are concerned with their fertility since Palestinians with a high fertility rate may outnumber Jews inside or outside the country.

In the context of this conflict, hatred is fear and anger routinized or sedimented in a culture, society, ethnic group, or nation. Hatred, or the sediment of fear and anger, pollutes flowing water as well.

What if the Zionist movement had built on sharing the joy of establishing their land of dream with Palestinians? Zionists have brought Palestinians pain and misery but no joy yet. Joy, a religious term, is an economic benefit in secular terms. Is it too late?

9. Empathy, Forgotten

A tiny spark blazes up a gasoline-soaked cloth. The land has been soaked with fear and anger. People on both sides have been grievously suffering. Many Jews had no secure place to live, whether in Europe or elsewhere, and migrated to Israel. But Israeli Jews now live in danger and fear, and most of them have nowhere to emigrate to. Many Palestinians have lost their place and means to live. They also live in danger, fear, and deplorable conditions.

Empathy would help. The awareness of the other person's tragedies and hope would develop compassion toward the other side. People's empathy would restrain their political leadership from self-serving.

Empathy is the lubricant for a virtuous cycle of hope and joy. This feedback loop is delicate and would be slow in progress.

Does politics hinder empathy? I hope not. Can we remember forgotten empathy? I hope so.

I gratefully acknowledge the generous and helpful comments and suggestions of my friends in the Middle East, India, Africa, Europe, and the United States. They include a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew, and Christians (Anglicans, Catholics, and an Evangelical). Also, I thank Mr. Ishii, the Editor-in-Chief of AMOR web magazine, for giving me a chance to contribute this note to the magazine.