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# Completing the Occupation of Galilee—Operation Hiram

## GALILEE ON THE EVE OF ITS OCCUPATION

The population of the Galilee had been 241,000 in November 1947 on the eve of the partition of Palestine. More than 200,000 were Arabs, a few thousand were Circassians and Armenians, and 31,790 were Jews. Muslims constituted the vast majority of the Arab population in the region, numbering 169,000, followed by 29,000 Christians and 10,700 Druze. The dominant understanding that the population of the Galilee escaped the Nakba is not accurate, since of the 220 cities and villages in the Galilee populated by Arabs, only 70 remained after the Nakba. Over two-thirds of the Palestinian towns and villages had been destroyed and their populations expelled; 100,000 Arabs or fewer escaped this fate, representing about half of those who were living in the Galilee until the end of 1947. It is true that more Palestinian residents remained in the Galilee than in any other area occupied by Israel in 1948; nevertheless, ethnic cleansing in some parts of the Galilee was almost total.

In the Safad area, the destruction of Arab cities and villages was thorough.[1] Under Operation Hiram, at the end of October 1948 the fate of Arab villages in eastern Galilee was worse than in the rest of the Galilee, as had been the case from the beginning of the war. In addition to eastern Galilee's proximity to the Lebanese border, the fact that Jewish settlements were fairly thick in that region played an important role in the expulsion of Palestinians. As for central and lower Galilee, which were in the area allocated to the Arab state under the partition resolution, Jewish settlement had been sparse before the Nakba. In many population centers, Druze lived alongside Christians and Muslims, which contributed to a larger number of residents remaining. As we have mentioned, the Druze received special treatment from the Jewish state, no harm befell them, and all of their villages remained intact.

After the summer of 1948 the Druze in the mountain region became aware of the agreement between the leadership of the Druze along the coast with the state of Israel. The Maʿdi family from Yarka, which was a party to this agreement, maintained good relations with both the Arab and Jewish sides, and some family members managed to play an important role in events during and after the war. Despite the fact that many Arab inhabitants of the Galilee were not pleased with this agreement between the Druze and the Jews, they still maintained good relations with them, which contributed toward many villages in the Galilee—Druze and some neighboring villages—being able to escape destruction.

Similar to the situation of the Druze, the ties between the inhabitants of central Galilee and the National Liberation League in Haifa and Nazareth played a role in enabling some residents to stay. Many activists and leaders of the league returned to Haifa from Lebanon by way of al-Biʿna, Kufr Yasif, and other villages in the region. Some league members from these villages had helped distribute a pamphlet signed by the league and fraternal parties in Arab states at the beginning of October 1948. According to one activist, Hanna Ibrahim, an officer in the Arab Rescue Army (ARA) in Majd al-Krum had approved of the content of that communist pamphlet.[2] Such verbal and published testimonies by contemporaries of these events affirm that the inhabitants of central Galilee were fully aware of the military balance of power, which encouraged them to find ways to save themselves from uprooting and destitution.

During October 1948 there were indications of the imminent resumption of fighting. On the southern front, the Israeli army carried out an attack on the Egyptian army; in the north, predictions by ARA officers that the Galilee would soon fall became more frequent.[3] News of the retreat of the Egyptian army in the face of the Israeli army and the proximity of an attack on what remained of the Galilee greatly concerned residents of the area, particularly those who had cooperated with the ARA. People followed the news on the few radio sets available in the villages, while others sought news from their neighbors on the Israeli side, or from *al-Yawm* and *al-Ittihad* newspapers. On the eve of the launch of Operation Hiram, some contemporaries spoke of a sense that a new chapter of the Nakba was about to unfold.[4]

By the end of October, Israel emerged victorious from the war and, with no Arab armies posing a threat, sought to expand into more territory at the expense of the Palestinians. The inhabitants of central Galilee, the so-called "Galilee pocket," were extremely alarmed when they saw the ARA withdrawing from their villages and region as the attacking Israeli army entered. Appeals by Israeli leaders to the Palestinian people to remain peaceful and be rewarded by a life of equality and dignity in the Jewish state were not respected. Sixty thousand people lived in central Galilee in fifty villages—between Majd al-Krum to the west, ʿIlabun to the east, al-Battuf to the south, and the Lebanese border to the north—which the Israeli army occupied in sixty hours.

Prior to the start of Operation Hiram, some Israeli cabinet ministers expressed reservations concerning completing the occupation of the Galilee, where there were tens of thousands of Arab inhabitants. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, for one, said it was better for Israel to forego occupying the Galilee because it was "full of Arabs," including refugees from western and eastern Galilee.[5] This statement came in the wake of a proposal by Ben-Gurion at the 26 September 1948 cabinet meeting to resume the fighting and to occupy what remained of the Galilee. The prime minister replied during the meeting that: "Assuming there is an outbreak of fighting, we will clean central Galilee in one stroke; to cleanse it, including the refugees . . . that will not be possible without war." He then sought to convince the ministers: "If war were to break out in the whole country, as far as the Galilee is concerned . . . and without a great effort . . . it will be cleansed."[6]

Despite Ben-Gurion's statements and reassurances, the majority of cabinet ministers voted against his proposal to initiate a renewal of the fighting with the Arab states and to expel the 100,000 residents of the Galilee. However, as Tom Segev writes, the expulsion of the population that the Israeli prime minister had proposed was merely postponed, not cancelled. A month after that meeting in which Ben-Gurion found himself in the minority, he commented on a statement by military intelligence operative Ezra Danin which irritated him: "There is only one task left for the Arabs in Israel: to run."[7] Thus the unambiguous statement about taking the opportunity of war to "cleanse Galilee," and the plans of the army command to occupy the region and expel its population, became an agenda that was executed with the renewal of hostilities. These plans from the top of the Israeli political and military pyramid near the end of 1948 are more evidence against the Zionist narrative about the dispersal of the Palestinians as an unplanned result of war.

Predictably, completing the occupation of the Galilee met with no serious resistance from the Arab side.[8] As noted earlier, Druze residents knew about the agreement between their leaders and Israel, and the communist activists in some villages (al-Bi'na, Tarshiha, al-Rama, and 'Ilabun) knew of the league branches in Haifa and Nazareth joining the Israeli Communist Party.[9] The vast majority of the population hoped that the fate of their villages after occupation would be like Nazareth and its district, which had escaped destruction and dispersal. To achieve that, they were prepared to surrender their villages without resistance to the Israeli army. Indeed, the Arab residents did not confront the Israeli forces, and there were no casualties in the Israeli army ranks, apart from a few random cases. In spite of that, the inhabitants paid a heavy price: hundreds were executed and thousands were forced to migrate during and after the occupation. These criminal acts took place at a late stage in the war, implementing Ben-Gurion's plan and his previous promises to ministers in his government.

During Operation Hiram, the Israeli army perpetrated a number of massacres,[10] when there was a government and organized state institutions in place, contrary to the first half of 1948. On the eve of the occupation of Nazareth

Ben-Gurion had issued strict orders to the army and its commanders not to attack the population and their holy places; as a result, tens of thousands of residents remained in their homes. However, a hundred days later he allowed the army to act in an entirely different way in Muslim and Christian villages, since Ben-Gurion wanted the upper Galilee totally void of its Arab inhabitants; the soldiers carried out actions to guarantee that result. The opening event of the occupation was the bombardment of several villages by aircraft, which spread fear and terror among the population. In the bombardment of Tarshiha, for example, dozens were killed and others were buried under the rubble of their homes.[11] Yet despite the terrorizing of defenseless residents, at least half of the population remained in their homes and villages. Why did they stay despite the occurrence of massacres and acts of expulsion?

## THE WESTERN FRONT OF THE GALILEE POCKET

Majd al-Krum lies to the west of al-Shaghur region which separates upper from lower Galilee. Until 1948, the village land extended to the houses on the eastern side of al-Birwa village. The population of Majd al-Krum on the eve of its occupation was about 2,000, swelled by hundreds of refugees from neighboring villages, such as al-Birwa, Sha'b, al-Damun, and others. Between the second cease-fire and Operation Hiram, men from the village, along with youth from neighboring villages, helped the ARA to defend the region and prevent its occupation.[12] Despite advances and retreats during the summer months, which caused casualties on both sides, the front lines did not change. Due to the strategic position of the village and the collaboration between the villagers and the volunteers stationed there, they feared Israeli retaliation.

Members of the ARA had good relations with the people of Majd al-Krum; there were no reports of tensions or sensitivities between them, as was the case in some other villages in the Galilee. The local ARA command were headquartered in the former British police station on the east side of the village. Some residents (Muhammad 'Ali Sa'id Qaddah, Muhammad Kan'an, and others) said that the volunteers used to help the locals gather the harvest and plant their crops in the summer. In return, the villagers fed, housed, and even washed the clothes of the volunteers.[13] Khaled Dhiyab Farhat (who had graduated from high school before the Nakba) testified that he was the secretary of the local committee that ran the affairs of the village in cooperation with the commanders of the ARA. Nevertheless, these witnesses stressed that they were apprehensive about the future on the eve of the occupation. News about the the Arab world in general and the Palestinian front in particular did not bode well. They feared a fate similar to that of the villages of al-Birwa, al-Damun, and Sha'b, whose inhabitants were uprooted and forced to migrate.

There was some glimmer of hope that the fate of the village would be similar to that of some villages in western Galilee which had escaped destruction and

dispersal. Among the nearby villages which had escaped were al-Makr, al-Jadida, Kufr Yasif, Abu Snan, Yarka, and Julis.[14] However, most coastal villages, such as al-Manshiyya, al-Samiriyya, Um al-Faraj, al-Nahr, al-Zib, al-Bassa, and others were destroyed and their residents were expelled. The question that preyed on the minds of residents of Majd al-Krum was: How could they ensure that they remain and not be expelled? It was not hard for the residents to learn that members of the Ma'di family of Yarka had played an important role in the survival of many villages in western Galilee through their ties with the Israeli side; so they made sure to maintain good neighborly relations, according to some of those whom I interviewed and who had witnessed the events of those days. Regardless, circumspection and watchfulness were the order of the day, particularly after news that fighting had resumed on the Egyptian front.

After sunset on Friday, 29 October 1948, the commander of the ARA unit asked the people of Majd al-Krum to go to al-'Ayn Square,[15] and when they gathered there, he informed them that he had received orders to withdraw to Lebanon immediately. This officer thanked the inhabitants for their kindness and hospitality, and he asked them not to leave their village so as not to lose it. He recommended that they get in touch with the Jewish side to conclude a surrender agreement that would protect the village from destruction and the expulsion of its residents.[16] The people of the village feared for what would become of the young men who had fought alongside the ARA in previous months, and the officer recommended that the youth seek refuge in the mountains and hide there until after the village surrendered. Indeed, the ARA withdrew from the village that same night, and dozens of young men and some families went with them towards the northeast. However, the vast majority of the inhabitants remained in their homes, according to the advice of the Iraqi officer.[17]

The advice from the officer in Majd al-Krum prior to the withdrawal of his unit was similar to that of his counterpart in the ARA in Nazareth on the eve of its fall. The behavior of the villagers was also similar to that of the leaders of the city. On the same night on which the ARA volunteers withdrew, a delegation from the village went to see acquaintances from the Ma'di family in neighboring Yarka.[18] From there Haim Orbach, the intelligence officer for western Galilee, was contacted, and together they arranged for a meeting with the army unit camped in al-Birwa village. In this meeting agreement was reached on a surrender document for Majd al-Krum and neighboring villages in al-Shaghur region.[19] On the basis of this document, soldiers from the 123rd company entered the village the following morning, accompanied by some residents. Muhammad Ziho (Abu 'Atif), who was a twelve-year-old child at the time, testified that he saw dozens of infantrymen enter from the western side and go in the direction of the center of the village.[20] The soldiers of this company respected the articles of the surrender agreement; they collected arms from the village, and did not engage in any acts of retribution. It is interesting that the testimonies of the villagers are in complete agreement with the narrative of Israeli military documents concerning

the process of the village surrendering in an orderly fashion and without incident on 30 October.

Hanan Levi, the intelligence officer of the 123rd company, sent a report to army headquarters in Haifa concerning the surrender of Majd al-Krum in the presence of some notables from the village, and the signing of the surrender document.[21] The villagers turned in twenty rifles of various types with some ammunition to the army, and "after a bit of pressure" they handed over fifteen more rifles. In the afternoon (at 4:15 p.m.) the commanding officer of the 122nd company arrived in the village with his men and took charge, and the officer received the rifles and ammunition which the villagers had surrendered that same day.[22] He chose about a hundred villagers who then headed to al-Layyat area, west of the village, where they cleared the street of the rocks and stones which blocked traffic. On the same day, the villagers were informed that there would be a curfew at night, starting at six in the evening and ending at six in the morning of the following day. According to the military report, the villagers accepted the orders with understanding and the surrender of the village went peacefully.

Another document by Haifa intelligence officers dated 31 October 1948, classified "secret and urgent," relates the surrender of Majd al-Krum from the perspective of the army.[23] After the withdrawal of "enemy forces" from the region of al-Birwa–Majd al-Krum, a delegation of villagers from Majd al-Krum, al-Bi'na, and Dayr al-Asad arrived in al-Birwa and were met by the commander of the 123rd company. The following morning (30 October) troops entered the village, and the surrender was signed at 14:25.[24] The document adds that there were 2,000 original inhabitants plus some refugees from neighboring villages. Of the few inhabitants of the village who left, most were young men who were hiding in the mountains and would likely return to their homes in a few days. It mentions that many young men were present in the village, and that some were refugees from neighboring villages "who had surely taken part in the fighting."

We return once again to the sequence of events in Majd al-Krum on the day of its surrender, 30 October 1948. In the afternoon (after the signing of the surrender), the sound of gunfire and cannon fire were heard from the east. The soldiers of the 123rd company returned fire, and one or two were hit by the surprise attack.[25] The source of the firing from the east were the soldiers of the Golani Brigade who had entered the village of 'Ilabun that morning, and then headed northwest to Majd al-Krum. Once the mistake and misunderstanding became clear and firing from both sides stopped, the soldiers of the brigade were informed that the village had surrendered and given up its arms according to the agreement. In this way the day ended without any casualties among the villagers, and the local residents and the refugees could breathe easy, especially after hearing what the brigade had done in 'Ilabun and its threat to do even worse in Majd al-Krum.

What follows are the events of the surrender of the village according to the testimonies of a number of villagers, as told over a ten-year period. The story relayed by Dr. Khalid Dhiyab Farhat includes important details of what happened to his

family. As we mentioned above, Khalid was secretary of the local committee that ran the affairs of the village. After the spread of the news that this "army" had withdrawn, his father and his grandfather asked him that same evening to accompany two of his unmarried sisters to a safe Arab region,[26] fear for the honor of the two young women being the motive for this family decision. Dhiyab added that dozens of young men from the village accompanied the ARA in its retreat to the northeast by way of al-Bi'na and Dayr al-Asad until they reached Rumaysh. A few days after their arrival in Lebanon, he, along with other refugees, heard about a massacre that had taken place in al-'Ayn Square in the village, so he decided to remain in Lebanon with his sisters and not return to Majd al-Krum. Eventually, Dr. Dhiyab arrived in the United States (he died there in 2012), while his sisters returned to the village through the family reunification provision two years after migrating.[27]

Muhammad Kan'an (Abu 'Atif) said that his wife had delivered her first child two weeks before the surrender of Majd al-Krum, so he remained with her following the withdrawal of the ARA. However, he and some young men in his extended family decided late that night (29 October) to seek refuge with Druze friends in neighboring Sajur.[28] The Kan'an family arrived at the house of their friends at dawn next day. At noon, there was a commotion in the small village, and he understood from his hosts that Sajur notables were to go to the entrance of the village to welcome Jewish soldiers who were to arrive soon from the east; the welcome festivities never took place because the soldiers were in a hurry on their way west, according to their hosts, to Majd al-Krum "to punish its residents as they had done in 'Ilabun."[29] This news spurred the young men from the Kan'an family to return quickly to their houses and their families before the arrival of those soldiers.

Here we shall relate another testimony from a third party who lived through the events, and was an active participant. Farid Butrus Zurayq from 'Ilabun went with the soldiers from the Golani Brigade who raced from his village to Majd al-Krum. Farid had been a policeman in Jerusalem for several years, where he had learned Hebrew. When the brigade entered 'Ilabun he was chosen with four other youth to accompany the soldiers travelling from there in three military vehicles.[30] When they arrived at the eastern entrance to Majd al-Krum on the afternoon of 30 October, the soldiers began to bombard the village. After a brief exchange of fire, it became apparent that Israeli soldiers had entered a village that had surrendered. Israeli officers in Majd al-Krum conveyed this to the soldiers from the Golani Brigade and asked them to return from where they had come. Zurayq recalls that officer Orbach was the one who spoke to the soldiers from the Golani Brigade, and he asked twice, in a surprised tone: "Why have you come here from 'Ilabun?"

The day ended relatively peacefully under an orderly surrender, according to the testimonies of the villagers and the army records. The results were quite different when events moved to the nearby villages of al-Shaghur. On the following day, an army unit entered neighboring al-Bi'na and Dayr al-Asad near the pool which separates the two villages. The soldiers separated the men from the women

and children. In accordance with the surrender agreement concluded by notables from al-Birwa with the army, the inhabitants of the two villages surrendered the weapons in their possession. Then the soldiers chose two young men from each village, and an officer told them to go fetch water for the soldiers. As the four youth walked a short distance away, the soldiers fired on them, killing them. Thus they were executed before the eyes of residents of the two villages who were horrified and panicked. The deceased were Subhi Muhammad Dhabbah (twenty-three years old) and Ahmad ʻIsa (twenty-seven years old) from Dayr al-Asad, and ʻAli Muhammad al-ʻAbid (seventeen years old) and Hanna Elias Farhud (twenty-five years old) from al-Biʻna.[31] Then the soldiers picked dozens of young men and took them to prison camps. The officer ordered the rest of the inhabitants to begin moving north in the direction of Lebanon, but he allowed them half an hour to go to their homes to gather some necessities and their valuables before leaving. The women's tears and the children's cries did not change the mind of the officer who then ordered his troops to fire in the air to speed up the operation.[32]

When the villagers realized that the expulsion order would be carried out, they began to leave their houses and head north towards Lebanon.[33] However, when they had traveled far from the soldiers they decided to head east. They reached an area north of the village of Nahaf, and learned from inhabitants they met in the mountains that the Israeli army had executed four of its residents also, and ordered the rest to leave to Lebanon. The Biʻna and Dayr al-Asad villagers continued east until they reached the Druze village of Sajur where they stopped close to the village. The villagers were of two minds: some thought they should go back to their homes instead of continuing their travels,[34] and so headed back to their homes in Biʻna and Dayr al-Asad, but others continued their journey, joining tens of thousands of refugees from the Galilee. As it turned out later, the return of some inhabitants played a big role in the two villages remaining and being saved from destruction.

The fate of the people of Nahaf was similar to that of their neighbors to the west. The soldiers of the unit that entered the village, ordered the inhabitants to assemble on one of the threshing floors, then chose two young men and shot them in front of the villagers. The officer in charge ordered the rest of the villagers to leave north to Lebanon. The execution of the two youths and the continued shooting in the air left the residents with no choice but to leave, so they began their way north. On the mountainous trek to Lebanon, they stopped near houses of neighboring Druze villages and were offered some food and water. The hospitality of their neighbors helped to ease their terror. The fact that they were far from the soldiers encouraged some of them to return to their villages, and they were later joined by others from the village. So the same scene repeated itself in Nahaf, as in al-Biʻna and Dayr al-Asad.

One eyewitness from the Qadiri family (Abu Shawkat) spoke of what he had seen from the cave where he and his family were hiding at the top of a mountain

overlooking Nahaf.[35] He saw and heard the Israeli soldiers open fire on four men from among the residents of the village, and the expulsion of others with shots being fired in the air to speed them on their way. Abu Shawkat added that the mukhtar of the village, Hamad Ahmad ʿAbdullah (Abu ʿAwad), went to Yarka with the help of two residents from neighboring Julis village. This visit to the Maʿdi family, according to this testimony and others stories told by villagers from Shaghur, played a significant role in the residents of the area remaining in their houses. The agreements signed with the army in al-Birwa through the facilitation of Haim Orbach and the Maʿdi family, and the help that residents of Druze villages offered to their neighbors who were scattered in the mountains, contributed to the residents remaining and returning to their villages. In addition, the difficult mountain terrain and the fact that the soldiers did not accompany the expelled villagers encouraged them to risk returning to their homes quickly.

A ruling of the Supreme Court in Jerusalem in 1951 confirms the details of some of the events that occurred in al-Shaghur villages as related by eyewitnesses. On 30 October 1948, "the people of Nahaf surrendered to a unit of the Israeli army which approached the village from the west. The following day, another army unit approached from the east, collected the villagers in the threshing floor area, and fired on four men, killing them under circumstances which are not sufficiently clear to us."[36] Then the court decision states: "The rest of the villagers were ordered to leave their village and go north to Lebanon and refugees from Shaʿb who had taken refuge in the village left with them. Some villagers reached neighboring villages, while others continued walking until they reached the Lebanese border, where they concentrated in the village of Rumaysh near the border. The village mukhtar, Hamad Ahmad ʿAbdullah, contacted the army authorities who allowed the inhabitants of the village to return to their houses. This happened only two to three days after they had been expelled; the news quickly reached the villagers who were scattered across the Galilee mountains, and they returned to their village in small groups."[37]

A military unit entered the village of al-Rama, east of Nahaf, on Sunday 31 October. The soldiers gathered the men east of the village, near the houses of the Nakhla family. Shortly after the inhabitants had gathered an explosion was heard, and they saw a dense cloud of dust at the same location. It became clear later that this was the result of blowing up Elias Shukri's house. "There was a hot southerly wind blowing that day," wrote Elias Srouji in his memoirs. Srouji was from Nazareth, and he had arrived in the village from Lebanon the previous day with his sick father. It was noon when a soldier "with dark complexion," thought to be a Yemeni Jew,[38] addressed the villagers. He then approached the rows of young men sitting on the ground, and ordered some of them to stand up and wait on the side. The young men whom the officer had chosen were taken as "prisoners of war" by the army and were moved to Israeli prisons.

Sitting next to Dr. Srouji was his colleague Dr. ʿAtallah Shayban, who had brought a stethoscope with him. When this soldier came close to him, he said: "You, doctor, stand up." The Latin priest, who feared for the lives of those young

men, stepped forward and asked the officer to release the doctor "so that he could treat a woman who was delivering a baby at home." The officer agreed to the priest's request and set Dr. Shayban free.[39] According to Srouji, after 'Atallah's release from among the prisoners, he went to his friend Srouji "and said: 'Come, let us talk to the officer.' I agreed and we walked together in the direction of the command center. Dr. 'Atallah's request to remain in al-Rama was approved immediately. Then the officer asked me what I wanted, and I explained to him that I had arrived in Rama with my father who was suffering from cancer, and I asked that we be allowed to return to our homes in Nazareth." Srouji writes in his memoirs that his request was approved and members of his family were allowed to return from al-Rama to their city.[40]

The possibly Yemeni soldier then stood on an elevated patch of ground and said: "Our Druze friends were with us from the beginning of the road. Everyone else is our enemy. Under the orders of the Israeli government you have one hour to go back to your houses and fetch what you want; after that you will have to head north." This statement caused a commotion among those present, and some asked: "Where are you expelling us to? What about the promises of the army yesterday that no harm would come to us?" The same soldier answered: "We know nothing about any promises. We were not here yesterday."[41] The soldiers began to fire in the air to speed the departure of the gathered men in keeping with the expulsion order.

The al-Rama residents who were not expelled heard the shots being fired in the air, and saw with their own eyes the departure of the majority of the population northwards towards Lebanon. The Christian residents obeyed the orders and began their slow uphill climb towards Jarmaq Mountain north of their village. Others ran away and hid in caves and in the mountains. When the caravan of expellees reached al-Sahla region near Bayt Jan,[42] the Druze inhabitants of that village and of neighboring al-Buqay'a met them and proposed to help them to prevent their expulsion. Indeed, they contacted Shaykh Jabr al-Ma'di and other Druze notables whose intervention was largely responsible for the return of the inhabitants of al-Rama to their village.[43] In this way, the order to expel the Christians from al-Rama was reversed, and they were permitted to return to their homes. Subsequently, the inhabitants who returned sent messages to their families, who were near the southern Lebanese border, and the great majority returned to their homes in al-Rama.

There are many written and oral accounts concerning the reasons for the reversal of the order to expel Christians from al-Rama and the subsequent permission for them to return to their homes in the following few days.[44] However, all these accounts agree that only the Christians were expelled (and not the Druze), in an effort to uproot them and expel them to Lebanon. There is unanimity that the expellees returned to their homes after spending a day or two near the village of Bayt Jan.[45] We shall return later to the expulsion of residents from al-Rama and then the allowing of their return, which happened within the same time frame

as the expulsion of residents of ʻIlabun, which stirred up controversy. The news of the expulsion of ʻIlabun villagers reached minister Bechor Shitrit, who went to see Minister of Defense and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion concerning this matter. Furthermore, the expulsion of Christians from the Galilee stirred up criticism and considerable correspondence from clergy in the country and in Lebanon and the Western world. Which factor played a bigger role in the decision to allow the residents of al-Rama to return: the reaction from the churches and fear of the repercussions, or the intervention of the Druze leaders in Yarka and elsewhere? There is no clear answer to this question in Israeli archives or historical literature on the subject. It would appear that both reasons combined to lead to the cancellation of the expulsion order and the permission to the residents of al-Rama and other villages to return to their homes.

In concluding this section of the chapter, it should be emphasized that attempts to expel Muslim and Christian residents of al-Shaghur villages failed to a large extent. The residents refused to bow down to the expulsion orders which were issued by officers of military units, and resisted the orders to expel them in various ways, including by efforts to gain time, peaceful resistance, asking their Druze neighbors for help, and other means. Verbal and written accounts confirm that the residents during this period of the war were aware that resistance through such means was far more preferable than acceptance of being uprooted from their country and their homes. Those residents, the majority of whom had not taken part in fighting the Israeli army following the withdrawal of units of the ARA, surrendered, and the soldiers who entered the area met no resistance from the residents. These facts made it difficult for Israel and its army to use an iron fist policy to expel the population. In addition, the demographic composition of the inhabitants of al-Shaghur villages, which consisted of Muslims, Christians, and Druze, was an important factor in the "hesitancy" of some military units to use excessive force or to harass those whom the state did not wish to expel. For these reasons, most of al-Shaghur villagers escaped destruction and expulsion, and the villages of al-Rama, Nahaf, Sajur, Dayr al-Asad, al-Biʻna, and Majd al-Krum are still populated to this day.

## THE MASSACRE IN ʻILABUN AND THE EXPULSION OF ITS RESIDENTS

ʻIlabun was a peaceable village nestled in the southeastern section of the Galilee pocket before it was occupied in Operation Hiram. In this relatively small village lived hundreds of Catholics and Christian Orthodox residents,[46] most of whose ancestors came from neighboring villages in the mid-eighteenth century, and they continued to maintain familial and friendship ties with their ancestral villages.[47] Some ʻIlabun residents had relatives and friends in Lebanon, which was helpful when they were expelled from the village, as we shall see below. Until 1948, the

very few residents who had finished high school went to work in Haifa, ʻAkka, Jaffa, and other cities. Like other residents of the Galilee villages, the vast majority of the inhabitants of ʻIlabun worked in agriculture, from which they were able to secure what they needed to feed themselves and live a modest life.

ʻIlabun's location on the front lines and the stationing of units of the ARA nearby caused the inhabitants to fear retribution from the Israeli army. Many felt that they were in a sensitive situation, and that they should be careful not to anger either party to the conflict.[48] The residents followed the news of the fighting on the radio and some newspapers which arrived from neighboring villages. The radio news was from the BBC, which they considered to be more accurate and truthful than other outlets, and the villagers passed the news to one another.[49] The villagers also received news from refugees passing by on the northward route about the fall of the villages of Hittin, Lubya, and al-Shajara, and their expulsion after occupation. The news was of the weakness of the Arab side and the defeats it suffered, and the lessons were about trusting the ARA, which had failed to save the cities and villages of the Galilee from falling into the hands of the Israeli army.

The tension and fear of the future caused dozens of the inhabitants of ʻIlabun to leave their houses and to live in the vineyards and caves near the village. Some families sent the women and children to stay with their relatives in the villages of Dayr Hanna, al-Maghar, and al-Rama, which were far from the battlefront. But when autumn came, many had to return to their houses despite their fear of what the days ahead might bring.[50] In the period preceding Operation Hiram, ʻIlabun's residents lost contact with the cities they used to visit and work in, which had fallen under Israeli occupation, such as Tiberias, Nazareth, Haifa, and ʻAkka. The residents of these cities and the villages which escaped the depopulation of their districts lived under Israeli military rule. The road from central Galilee to south Lebanon remained open and relatively easy to travel on, but the clouds of renewed fighting began gathering in October 1948. When the inhabitants heard that fighting had renewed on the Egyptian front, tension and pressure increased, as a number of those whom I interviewed recounted.

Habib Zurayq resided in ʻIlabun through that period, and preserved many of its events in his memories. He joined the National Liberation League several years before the Nakba.[51] Like the majority of his comrades he supported the partition resolution and defended it in gatherings with relatives and friends. When at the beginning of October the League decided to distribute its anti-war pamphlet against the intervention of Arab armies in the war, he volunteered to complete the task in the Galilee pocket, in the villages of al-Rama and its neighborhood. Riding his donkey, he brought the pamphlets to his own village of ʻIlabun which he reached by way of Wadi Salama at night, leaving bundles of pamphlets in the village center before going to bed.[52]

The residents of ʻIlabun were the first to document the story of their village in detail, in books, films, and filmed testimonies. The following pages rely to a great

extent on the publications of the "village historian" Elias Surur, whose testimony I heard before his sudden death.

According to Surur, "On the evening of 29 October, the ʻIlabun villagers climbed onto their roofs to sleep as they were accustomed to do on hot nights. But they did not hear the sounds usually made by the ARA to the southeast of their village." It became apparent later that the ARA had withdrawn from the region without allowing the young men from the village, who had been with them, to return to their families.[53] Some young men who had cooperated with the volunteers accompanied them to Lebanon, while others chose to hide in the mountains, to see what would happen to their village when the Israeli army entered it. The residents on the whole stayed in their homes, and many of them put up white flags on the roofs of their houses as a sign of surrender. Indeed, the soldiers of the Golani Brigade who entered the village the next morning met no resistance from the villagers; on the contrary, clergymen from the Catholic and Orthodox churches hailed the soldiers in welcome and peace.[54]

A large number of the residents of ʻIlabun had spent the night in the Catholic church and in the neighboring house of the priest, Murqus al-Muʻallim, and in the Orthodox church. After the entry of the soldiers of the Golani Brigade into the village, the officer asked all the inhabitants to gather in the village center, al-Hara, where the soldiers proceeded to separate the men from the women, as was their custom in occupied Arab villages. They shouted at anyone who delayed in leaving the churches, using gunfire to speed up the operation. As a result of the shooting, ʻAzar Salim Maslam was killed, and two other youths, Yusif Ilyas Sulayh and Butrus Shukri Hanna, were wounded.[55] A short while after completing the ceremony of surrendering the village, a soldier stood up in front of the men and chose a number of them, asking them to stand aside. Seventeen young men were chosen, mostly in their twenties. Afterwards the soldiers ordered the rest of the residents to walk in the direction of al-Maghar. The priest begged the soldiers to take the men and leave the women and children in the village, but they refused.

After the residents of ʻIlabun had moved a few dozen meters from the houses in their village, the soldiers divided the young men who had been told to stand aside into five groups:

1. The first group consisted of Milad Sulayman, Fadl Fadlu ʻIlabuni, and Zaki Musa Nakhla. The soldiers accompanied them to Subhi Matar's vegetable garden, and shot them there.[56]
2. The second group consisted of Khalil Nakhla, Mikha'il Mitri Shami and Abdulla Samʻan Shufani. Other soldiers took them to the cemetery and killed them.
3. The third group consisted of Naʻim Ghantus Zurayq, Hanna Ibrahim Khoury Ashqar, and Muhammad Khaled Asʻad (a refugee from Hittin). The soldiers took them to Elias Hawwa's bakery and killed them.
4. The fourth group consisted of Badiʻ Jiryis Zurayq, Jiryis Shibli al-Hayik, and Fu'ad Nawfal Zurayq, whom the soldiers took to the south of the village center and killed.

5. The fifth group consisted of Faraj Hazima Zurayq, Farid Zurayq, Fadlu Ghantus Zurayq, Dhiyab Dawud Zurayq, and Habib Zurayq, who were placed in a military vehicle driven by Faraj Zurayq who was ordered to drive in front of the vehicles carrying the soldiers which headed north, behind the caravan of expelled villagers walking on foot.

The inhabitants of ʻIlabun migrated from their village not knowing the fate of the youth whom the soldiers had killed. When they got to al-Maghar, they begged the soldiers to let them go back home, but the soldiers told them to continue walking north in the direction of Lebanon. When the villagers left al-Maghar, one of the old men yelled at the top of his voice: "People, ʻIlabun is dead!" and the crying and lamentations of the women became louder.[57] When the caravan of refugees reached the vicinity of Kufr ʻAnan, the soldiers ordered everyone to sit down under the great terebinth tree west of the main road. When people asked for something to feed the children, the soldiers gave them some boiled potatoes, but they had hardly begun to eat when the soldiers started firing, and Samʻan Jiryis Shufani was killed in front of everyone.[58] Later in the evening, the forced migrants reached the village of Farradiyya where they slept in and around the mosque.

The villagers have told the details of how they were uprooted from ʻIlabun and the migration journey up to their arrival in Lebanon—and they have documented it.[59] These villagers also are an example of the revival of the memory of the Nakba in their village after their return to it. They erected a monument for the martyrs of the massacre, and persist in reviving its memory and transmitting the story from one generation to the next. We shall relate briefly the details of the migration journey and the return; readers can find more copious details of the events in ʻIlabun during the Nakba in books, testimonies, films, and other accessible documentation cited below.

On the morning of the following day, 31 October, soldiers picked thirty-four young men from the inhabitants of ʻIlabun and took them to prisoner of war camps, along with the five young men from the Zurayq family who had accompanied the soldiers in the military vehicle as far as Majd al-Krum and who had returned the same day.[60] When the prisoners reached the village of al-Maghar (where similar groups from other Arab villages in the Galilee gathered) they learned some details of the massacre of the young men from ʻIlabun whom the soldiers had detained after the expulsion of its inhabitants.[61] News of what had happened in the village travelled quickly throughout the Galilee, ramping up the fear and terror already experienced by defenseless civilians. Nevertheless, most of the people of the Galilee tried to overcome their fears and to cling to their villages, cities, and land, so that they would not suffer the same fate as the refugees whom Israel had uprooted from their homes and then prohibited from returning.

After the caravan of refugees from ʻIlabun reached the Mirun crossroads the soldiers accompanying them allowed the exhausted villagers to rest and search for something to eat. The men went to the deserted houses of the depopulated Mirun village and returned after a short while carrying sacks of flour and some legumes.[62]

The women kneaded the dough, then baked it on a fire using pots and pans they found in the abandoned houses. After everyone ate, some slept under the olive trees. During the night, the soldiers disappeared, and the villagers rejoiced; however, at midnight, army trucks arrived and the soldiers ordered the villagers to get on and transported them to the Lebanese border.[63] There they were put out of the army trucks and ordered to march north. When dawn broke, the villagers discovered that the soldiers and the trucks had disappeared.[64] When they saw Rumaysh, which was the closest town, they knew that they were in south Lebanon. There the ʻIlabun villagers met others from their village who had arrived a few days before them on their own.

Despite the harsh circumstances, the expelled villagers from ʻIlabun relaxed when they reached south Lebanon and saw some young men from their village who had arrived ahead of them. After a short rest, the villagers continued on their way to the village of ʻAyn Ibil, about eight kilometers northeast of Rumaysh, and headed to the church to camp there.[65] The news of the arrival of the forced refugees from ʻIlabun spread, and the mukhtar of ʻIlabun, Faraj Surur, came to see the people of the village, as did Abdullah Murqus al-Muʻallim, who had reached on his own to the town of Damur where he sought refuge. The people of ʻIlabun stayed for several days in the church of ʻAyn Ibil until they were transported to Miya Miya refugee camp east of Sidon.[66]

After more than a week of wandering along the paths of migration, the expelled villagers from ʻIlabun arrived at the refugee camp, and a new chapter of their lives began far from their village, but it did not last long. They were permitted to return to their homes at the end of December, as we shall see later. The ʻIlabun saga is one of the most well-known stories of expulsion and massacre perpetrated inside or outside the Galilee. However, the causes of this act of retribution—aberrant in its cruelty against a Christian village far from the border—presents a riddle to this day.[67] Who took the decision to carry out this cruel act of collective punishment in ʻIlabun, and why? This matter has still not been clarified despite all that has been said and written on the subject. Furthermore, the decision to allow the return of the refugees from Lebanon in a quasi-secretive fashion and through devious channels is another puzzle. In the absence of Israeli archival documentation, the story of ʻIlabun shows the importance of verbal testimonies by the residents, for, without their words, it would not be possible to document the massacre, expulsion, and subsequent return of the villagers to their homes.

Compared to the many Arab villages through which the displaced villagers passed on their way to Lebanon, the fate of ʻIlabun was better, relatively speaking, except for the village of al-Maghar. The villages of Kufr ʻInan and Farradiyya joined the list of depopulated and destroyed villages.[68] Similarly, the residents of Mirun, Safsaf, Saʻsaʻ, Kufr Birʻim, and other villages along the Lebanese border were expelled. The residents of Jish were partially spared the ethnic cleansing in that area of the Galilee. It is clear that the large number of killings and expulsion

of the residents of upper Galilee was a planned policy, with high-level orders. The fact that al-Maghar and ʻIlabun endured was also part of this general policy to allow Druze villages to remain untouched.[69]

## KILLINGS AND EXPULSIONS IN OTHER VILLAGES

The residents of Kufr ʻInan and Farradiyya who had stayed in their homes did not remain there long after the expelled villagers from ʻIlabun passed by. A few weeks after the occupation of both villages, the Israeli army returned and expelled those who remained, either to the West Bank or to al-Rama and Majd al-Krum,[70] leaving no one. In the villages of upper Galilee closer to the Lebanese border, however, the war crimes and expulsions were more severe and cruel. The Israeli army carried out killings (including massacres), pillaged, and raped in a number of border villages, including Safsaf, Saliha, Jish, Hula, and Saʻsaʻ, on the day the villages were occupied or shortly thereafter. The killings and expulsions were carried out in villages that had put up no resistance to the occupiers. The inhabitants of some villages (Saliha, for example) even resisted the presence of the ARA in their village, but this did not save them when the soldiers of the Israeli army entered their village.

The murders of the residents of the "friendly" village of Saliha evoked reactions of condemnation even among the Jews themselves. According to the report by Yisrael Galili at the political conference of the Mapam party, ninety-four people were killed in the massacre at Saliha. However, documentation published in 1985 based on verbal testimonies lists one hundred and five people killed, with their names and ages.[71] The massacre at Dayr Yasin holds a central symbolic position in the Palestinian memory of the Nakba, but few have heard of the Saliha massacre, carried out by regular Israeli soldiers at a late stage of the war as part of Operation Hiram, despite the enormity of the murders and expulsions in that village. As this chapter shows, they were neither unique nor exceptional in the context of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians at that time, particularly in upper Galilee.

The events in ʻIlabun also affected the Arabs of al-Mawasi, who lived near that village and had good economic and social ties to it. Members of the tribe heard what the Israeli army soldiers had done in ʻIlabun, but they did not leave their dwellings, merely put up white flags. On Monday, 1 November, a unit of the Israeli army encountered sixteen-year-old Salih Irshayd as he was grazing his cattle, and shot and killed him; Salih Jaber, seventeen years old, was wounded but survived. On the same day soldiers met thirteen-year-old Salih Yusif al-Ramli with his cattle near the spring east of ʻIlabun, and shot and killed him.[72] The following day, army soldiers attacked whoever remained of al-Mawasi Arabs in al-Hinnawi district; they arrested twelve men and led them westwards to the eastern entrance of al-Battuf plain. There they killed them all, except for Saʻd Muhammad Dhib who was gravely wounded and escaped death by a miracle. Upon his recovery, he told his mother and relatives the details of what had happened.[73]

Husayn al-Shawahda was one of the first to hear about the massacre of al-Muwasi Arabs from Sa'd Dhib, and he in turn related what he had heard in the Um al-Thanaya region near the eastern al-Battuf plain. Sa'd testified that he was grazing his cattle when he saw someone hiding behind a tree. He asked what had happened, and the reply was that a massacre had taken place in which fourteen al-Mawasi Arabs had been killed. Sa'd added: "I and Mu'jal al-'Usba' were merely wounded. The soldiers sensed Mu'jal had not died, so they approached him and shot him in the head, killing him."[74] A woman, Zahiya al-Fawwaz, came along with her donkey. She put the wounded man (Sa'd) on her donkey and took him to a nearby cave to hide him. This woman continued to bring him food to the cave and to tend to his wounds. The soldiers found out that Sa'd Dhib was alive, so they searched for him in 'Ilabun but did not find him. A few days later Sa'd's mother found out he was alive and hiding in a cave, so she came to his hiding place and moved him to Syria, where he spent the rest of his life.

As to what became of the victims of the massacre of al-Mawasi Arabs, Husayn al-Shawahda testified that he went to the scene with his brother Muhammad and his son Isma'il, and they buried the martyrs in a cemetery near the 'Ayn al-Natiq cave. Husayn al-Shawahda said that he knew all of the martyrs, and he listed them by name, one by one.[75] After that massacre, the remaining al-Mawasi Arabs were expelled to Syria; only a few remained and took up residence in 'Ilabun. Several years later, when the Israeli Mekorot Water Company carried out excavations in the area, the martyrs' remains were moved to another cave, and years later they were moved to a cemetery in 'Ilabun where a monument for them was erected similar to the one for the 'Ilabun villagers themselves.

A terrible massacre carried out by soldiers of the Israeli army also occurred in Safsaf. This village near the Lebanese border was occupied on Saturday, 30 October. The soldiers gathered all those who remained in their homes and shot and killed twelve young men. Then they took dozens of men (some of whom had fought with the ARA) to a well where they executed them.[76] Not satisfied with killing the men in cold blood, the soldiers picked several women and asked them to fetch water to the village. After they had moved away some distance, the soldiers followed and raped them, killing two in the process. One old man could no longer control himself when he heard the cries of the victims of the rapes, and began yelling and rebuking the soldiers. As for the soldiers who were "guarding" the residents of the village, some attacked him by kicking and hitting him in the face and all over his body.[77] One of his female relatives testified that his face was still swollen from the soldiers' blows when she saw him a few days later. This old man had been carrying a letter in his pocket from a Jewish friend, called Balty, which he was to have used to protect himself. Later he joined the caravan of expellees who became refugees in Lebanon.[78]

Um Muhammad Hulayhal and other members of her family who saw with their own eyes or heard what happened in Safsaf, 'Ayn al-Zaytun, and other villages in

the region of Safad, buried those memories for dozens of years, and did not tell anyone outside the family. There was special sensitivity concerning the rape of young women from the village by the soldiers, which was considered a dishonor to the family.[79] Another reason which contributed to the burial of such memories was that those who remained in their homeland, despite the great suffering they endured, considered themselves relatively fortunate. They saw with their own eyes how residents of many villages in the region were uprooted and forced to migrate to Syria and Lebanon, so they chose not to annoy the "new masters" with stories of what their soldiers had done in the year of the Nakba.

One of the women assaulted was ʿAziza Shrayda, a relative of Fatima Shrayda who gave birth to a daughter several years after the Nakba whom she named ʿAziza. The murders, rapes, and expulsion of residents of Safsaf had a shattering impact on the population of the area who feared the prospect of a repetition of those events in their villages. No one who knew or heard of ʿAziza Shrayda's story ever forgot its details. ʿAziza was a woman in her thirties. Soldiers entered her house and found her with members of her family. The soldiers decided to rape this woman in front of her oldest son (seventeen years old) and her husband and her small children, but she resisted. The soldiers threatened to kill her firstborn son if she did not do as they wished, and in fact they did kill him before her eyes.[80] Then they threatened to kill her husband if she did not take off her clothes, and she refused, so the soldiers opened fire on her husband, killing him. Then they killed her in front of her small children before they left her house. One of her relatives took it upon himself to bring up her children who were orphaned and joined the caravans of refugees.

News of what happened in Safsaf reached the ears of some leaders of the state who quickly condemned what had happened and asked that the perpetrators be put on trial.[81] Haim Laskov, head of the seventh army guidance division, carried out an investigation. The officers admitted that some residents had fled the village and were pursued by soldiers who killed them. They also admitted that after the occupation of the villages was complete there was "disorder and confusion," after which a number of prisoners were killed and some residents were severely mistreated.[82] Yet despite the investigation and the confessions no soldier was punished for what he had done. Ben-Gurion and army officers persisted in covering up the soldiers' crimes against civilians and prisoners, and the expulsion of tens of thousands of residents in Operation Hiram. This coverup proves that the acts of murder and severe maltreatment of the residents in the Galilee were part of a top-level policy in which the Israeli government and army command were complicit. The fact that the army perpetrated fifteen massacres during a single week after occupying the Galilee speaks to the presence of a formal policy.[83]

Most villages in Safad suffered the same fate as a result of uprooting and expulsion in 1948. Residents of ten other villages joined this caravan as part of Operation Hiram: Qadas, Fara, Saliha, Dayshum, ʿAlma, ʿAmmuqa, Dallata, Qadditha, Taytaba, and al-Malikiyya, in addition to Safsaf. To the west of the village of

Jish, which was fated to escape that painful destiny, were the villages of Sa'sa', Dayr al-Qasi, Suhmata, al-Nabi Rubin, Suruh, and Tarbikha, which suffered uprooting and expulsion as well. Later, before the end of the Nakba, the villages of Iqrit Kufr Bir'im, and al-Mansura joined the list. In all, the inhabitants of more than thirty Arab villages were forced to leave their homes and to migrate during the operation to complete the occupation of the Galilee. The policy of ethnic cleansing was largely implemented in that late phase of the war. However, despite the great efforts expended by the army to terrorize the population and expel them, dozens of villages endured and their residents remained in their homes after Operation Hiram.

The Israeli army not only perpetrated massacres and expelled residents in upper Galilee, but it also acted similarly in southern Lebanon border areas. After the occupation of the Shi'a village of al-Hula, where ninety-four people were murdered in one of the worst massacres in the year of the Nakba including thirty-four prisoners who were blown up in the house in which they were being detained, Dov Yermiyahu, the Deputy Battalion Commander in the Carmeli Brigade during Operation Hiram, insisted that First Lieutenant Shmuel Lahis, who was under his command and who was responsible for this incident, be put on trial.[84] On the insistence of this senior officer, Lahis was tried, and convicted of perpetrating the crime, but he did not spend one day of his short sentence in jail.[85] This incident also confirms that the policy of killing and terrorizing civilians was not a matter of decisions by individual officers, but a general policy which was covered up by both the military and civilian leaders.

The large number of cases of murder and expulsion of residents in the Safad district requires a comprehensive study to uncover its causes. Was it a matter of geography, that is, the proximity of these villages to the Syrian and Lebanese borders, which was the cause of this aggressive policy, or was the main consideration the fact that a large number of the Galilee villages were in the area allocated to the Jewish state? What was the role of Jewish settlers in this area who were greedy for depopulated land that they could use for expansion? Did the fact that most of these villages were inhabited by Muslims play a role? Finally, did the fact that this area was far from Haifa and other cities where journalists and representatives of international organizations, including the United Nations, were to be found, play an auxiliary role? These are important questions but require a separate study.

To the west of the Safad and Tiberias districts, a larger number of Palestinians stayed in their towns and villages despite the killings and expulsions. In al-Battuf plain, the villages of Sakhnin, 'Arraba, and Dayr Hanna remained standing.[86] To the north, all al-Shaghur villages remained, from al-Rama to Majd al-Krum. North of al-Shaghur the picture was more complicated. The closer villages were to the Lebanese border, the less chance they stood of surviving, and the same was true of the villages near the Mediterranean coast. In general, about half the villages Israel occupied in Operation Hiram escaped uprooting and destruction. Half of the thirty villages which survived were either Druze, or mixed villages with Christian,

Muslim, and Druze residents. As we saw earlier, it was clear that the army received instructions on how to deal with these villages and executed them in full.

The presence of tens of thousands of Arabs in the upper Galilee was an important element in the initial opposition of some Israeli ministers to its occupation. Ben-Gurion tried to calm the fears of his ministers who were opposed at the 26 September cabinet meeting, saying that in the event of a renewal of the fighting, the Galilee would be "clear of Arabs" or "clean." Ben-Gurion reiterated the point on 21 October when he said, "There is nothing left for the Arabs in Israel to do except for one thing—to flee." A significant number of politicians and army leaders shared this opinion. Yosef Weitz, the well-known supporter and advocate of the transfer plans, sent an urgent letter to Yigal Yadin on the day that Operation Hiram was launched, proposing that the army should expel the refugees from the villages it occupied.[87] The policy of transfer was apparently not as fully realized as advocates had hoped, since Ben-Gurion declared after a tour of the northern front, "There is no enemy [left] in the Galilee," then added with some disappointment, "but there are many Arabs [who are still] in the Galilee."[88]

On 31 October, Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary a summary of the report by Moshe Carmel on the results of Operation Hiram. Out of approximately 60,000 residents of the occupied area, about half remained, while the rest had migrated. Ben-Gurion commented: "Many will migrate later."[89] This last sentence was not a mere wish; there was a plan with Carmel to arrive at this result on the ground. Indeed, on the morning of 31 October, Carmel sent a telegram to all the commanders of military units containing the following order: "Do everything you can to achieve a quick and immediate purification of the occupied areas of all enemy elements, according to standing orders. It is imperative to help the residents leave the occupied regions."[90] That same day, he sent a report about the partial fulfilment of the mission, and that he hoped to complete it in coordination with the prime minister and minister of defense. The policy was clear from the top of the pyramid to the field officers, and the only open question was the method of implementation and reactions inside the country and abroad.

Army officer (later minister) Yitzhak Moda'i wrote a research paper on Operation Hiram and its results for the history department of the Israeli army at the end of the 1950s. His research was based on military documents unknown to the general public.[91] The research question was: why did a large number of Arab residents remain in the Galilee pocket compared to other places? Moda'i wrote the following: "Some may think that the residents of the Galilee were not compelled, as others were compelled in other places, to flee to save themselves from severe maltreatment. However, the testimonies of officers and soldiers and official reports . . . show that our forces did not stand idly by, and that their treatment of the population could not possibly have been the reason they stayed under any circumstances." To emphasize his conclusions, Moda'i quoted Carmel's order. He then wrote in the conclusion to his study: "Most of the Arab residents of the Galilee

remained in their villages, but it was not because our forces did not try to expel them, quite often through means that were neither legal nor nice."[92]

The last sentence in Moda'i's report can be translated as "war crimes" and other many acts of maltreatment, whose oppressive details I have sometimes spared the reader. In this chapter, the emphasis has been on acts that were systematic and a matter of general policy, not exceptions. Some eyewitnesses have told stories about the amputation of fingers and other body organs to steal rings, gold, and jewels from those who were killed and mutilated. Some of these incidents reached the ears of Mapam party activists in the north, one of whom, Yosef Waschitz,[93] known for his research into Arab affairs in the country, wrote a report in which he discussed savage incidents in Safsaf and Saliha and other villages which were occupied in Operation Hiram.[94] However, Waschitz and Mapam leader Aharon Cohen and others who heard about those ugly deeds in the Galilee did nothing about them. Thus, those who knew about those crimes and kept silent became complicit in them in one way or the other. The same could be said of the army and other security agencies who concealed documents and information concerning murder and forced migration from researchers.

Officer Moda'i admitted in his research, which is based on army documents, that while a major effort was expended to get rid of the Arab population of the Galilee, those villagers resisted attempts to expel them, and some of them succeeded in foiling the policy of expulsion, with the residents of 'Ilabun being the best example.[95] In the final analysis, the massacre perpetrated by the army in that village and its criminal actions in Safsaf and other villages brought an end to the attempts to "help" the Arab population leave their villages and homes, even if it was for a limited period. But the killings, maltreatment, and terrorizing of the population did not stop altogether in the succeeding weeks. One example of that was the massacre that the army perpetrated in Majd al-Krum on 5 November, one week after the surrender of the village.

## THE MAJD AL-KRUM MASSACRE AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

As noted above, a report by a Haifa district intelligence officer in November monitored the situation in Majd al-Krum after its occupation but before the massacre in the village.[96] It mentioned that the population of the village was 2,000, counting the original villagers and refugees from the region. It also mentions that the village was full of young men of draft age, and it appeared that at least some of them had participated in the fighting on the side of the ARA which was stationed in and around Majd al-Krum. The officer mentioned that many of the men in the village, particularly the youth, had hidden in the mountains, and would try to go back in the following days.[97] His recommendations for action to be taken resemble the orders given by Moshe Carmel in those days, amounting to: "There is a need for

a speedy and serious combing operation, and a search for arms and collaborators with the ARA in the region." This recommendation was carried out a few days after the report was written.

On Friday, 5 November, an army unit arrived in Majd al-Krum, imposed a curfew on the village, and ordered the men to assemble in al-ʿAyn Square.[98] Then the officer in charge went to the mukhtar, Hajj ʿAbd Mannaʿ, and ordered that the villagers should surrender whatever arms were in their possession which they had not handed over a week earlier on the day the village surrendered.[99] Hajj ʿAbd replied that there were no arms left in the hands of the residents as far as he knew; at any rate investigating this matter and conducting a search would take over an hour. Still, the officer insisted that his demand be carried out and threatened that in one hour a young man would be executed every half hour until the residents surrendered the "hidden arms." In the meantime, soldiers were sent into the houses to search for arms and for the men who were in hiding and had not assembled at al-ʿAyn Square. All attempts by the mukhtar to convince the officer to retract his demand failed, as did the explanations they gave concerning the surrender document and the surrender of all arms and ammunition. The officer and his men appeared to be nervous and under pressure, which further alarmed the residents concerning what they might do when the deadline expired.

At the end of the hour, a number of young men were chosen to be executed according to the officer's warning. Those who were chosen and made to stand in the "execution line" were mostly refugees from the villages of Shaʿb and al-Birwa, and a few from Majd al-Krum. Abu Maʿyuf (Muhammad al-Hajj) watched the soldiers blow up his house before his eyes were bound and he was shot in al-ʿAyn Square in front of hundreds of men sitting on the ground. The officer continued carrying out his threat; he would issue orders to a six-man firing squad to execute a young man about every half hour, and in this way four more young men were killed, one after the other following Abu Maʿyuf.[100] To make certain they were dead, one soldier would approach each youth and shoot him in the head, in front of the residents, some of whom became frantic after this series of executions.

In addition to the five men executed in al-ʿAyn Square, other soldiers killed two young men from the neighboring village of Shaʿb who were visiting relatives. Soldiers who were monitoring the curfew in the southern sector of the village caught ʿAli Asʿad and one of his relatives and tortured them before killing them in an olive orchard.[101] Still other soldiers fired on two women in the village while searching houses. In this way eight to nine people were killed.[102] This massacre was clearly premeditated, without any justification for killing, and happened one week after the village had surrendered. The deliberate and systematic execution of one person every half hour to terrify the village distinguishes this crime from similar ones in the Galilee villages during Operation Hiram.

Perhaps the calamity in Majd al-Krum would have been greater had it not been for the arrival of Shafiq Abu ʿAbdu and Haim Orbach, the intelligence officer for

western Galilee, in the village. Immediately upon his arrival and his discovery of the results of the executions in al-'Ayn Square, he spoke to the officer in charge and ordered a halt to the killings. Three men had already been chosen and told to stand aside awaiting their turn, the first of whom was the mukhtar, Hajj 'Abd Manna'.[103] For the residents who witnessed the execution of one man every half hour before their eyes, the arrival of Shafiq Abu 'Abdu and Haim Orbach was a miracle which saved the three men who were standing next in line to be shot. It is no wonder then that the names of these two individuals are well known and are on the tongues of the residents to this day. The villagers and the refugees who had gone to the square calmed themselves and thanked God that the disaster had not been worse. The remaining damages that day were limited to the theft of some valuable items from the houses and shops, and the seizure of hundreds of livestock which the soldiers drove before them on leaving the village headed east.[104]

When news of the massacre in Majd al-Krum spread, it reached the ears of United Nations observers whose ship had docked in Haifa, according to the villagers. When the observers inquired as to what had happened in the village, the army denied that it had carried out a massacre there, and accused the residents of spreading rumors. Colonel Baruch Baruch wrote a short confidential letter about this matter, complaining that "Majd al-Krum is neglected by our forces, and it has no military governor or officer in charge."[105] When the UN fact-finding mission visited the village, Baruch claimed that "the residents had gone too far with charges against us of committing atrocities, murder, and theft." He added in the same document that had there been a "suitable remedy" they would not have dared spread such rumors. Baruch also predicted "when the observers' reports reach Paris and are blown out of proportion, they will cause us a lot of harm."[106] He concluded his letter to those in charge in the command by stressing the need to pay attention to such matters, which needed to be dealt with in a suitable and speedy manner.

Yosef Schnurman (Shani), the Haganah liaison officer with the UN observers in Haifa, had tried, along with other army officers, to cover up the massacres perpetrated during Operation Hiram. In the case of Majd al-Krum, there was total denial (as was the case with 'Ilabun), but this did not work. Officers of the Ninth Brigade, some of whose soldiers carried out the massacre, denied that it ever happened, and stressed that "it was possible to visit the village and satisfy oneself that there is no proof we were involved." Like Colonel Baruch, Schnurman also complained of the lack of a military governor who could intimidate the villagers with his stature, adding: "This situation has allowed Arabs to engage in conduct unbecoming in testifying before UN observers."[107] As we shall see later, the army's threats did not deter the village residents and notables from testifying about the events in Majd al-Krum before the observers, and then in the halls of the High Court of Justice.

The UN observers who visited the village a few days after the massacre sent a report to the United Nations, which Benny Morris relied on in his writings.[108] Over

several years I had heard about the massacre from my parents and relatives. Until I published an article in a newspaper in which I mentioned what had happened in the village, I had no archival document in my possession that could prove that those events had occurred. Some readers reacted harshly to my accusation that the army had killed some people in my village.[109] I quote below from a letter to *Haaretz* from a reader by the name of Ze'ev Yitzhaki who strongly denied what I said, adding: "I was the commander of the unit that received the surrender agreement by the village in the war of independence, but I affirm that there were neither thefts nor expulsions or executions."[110] Yitzhaki's testimony may be sincere, because it seems that he was the leader of the 122nd or 123rd Company, which came from the west and took charge of the village on 30 October. The massacre was perpetrated by other soldiers who came from the east a week later.

The new (or revisionist) Israeli historians have, since the end of the 1980s, uncovered a few of the atrocities perpetrated against Palestinians in the year of the Nakba. Although hundreds of villages were destroyed and their inhabitants expelled following massacres which were part of the ethnic cleansing policy to empty the country of its original inhabitants, little has been written about the atrocities—despite these having being witnessed by those who remained, whose testimonies no historian, including the revisionists, bothered to listen to. Even Morris writes: "But the army did not order the inhabitants to leave the village."[111] He was not aware of the massacre in Majd al-Krum until I had spoken to him in person. Once again, like Yitzhaki, he told a small part of the big picture. The unique type of massacre in Majd al-Krum, the theft of livestock, and the looting of some houses, convinced many that there was no safe place for the residents despite the surrender agreement, so dozens left the village. Morris himself gave me copies of military documents concerning the return of the army to the village in January 1949 and its expulsion of hundreds of residents; yet, he decided to overlook them when he defended the army and its actions.[112]

Finally, the name "Khawaja Ghazal" was mentioned by many residents of Majd al-Krum whose tales I had been hearing since my early years. They added that this *khawaja* (a term for a Westerner) spoke vernacular Arabic as we did. In the 1990s I had obtained some military documents from Israeli army archives concerning a massacre and expulsion of residents in Majd al-Krum. The name of the intelligence officer in the Haifa district, Tsvi Rabinovich, cropped up in those documents and reminded me of "Khawaja Ghazal" (his name meaning "gazelle" in Arabic), so I began looking for Rabinovich and tried to meet him. This was no easy task, and I did not succeed until 1998, which was before I published an article in Arabic on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of al-Nakba.[113] The intermediary who put me in touch with "Khawaja Ghazal" was Colonel Dov Yermiyahu from Nahariya who fought in the Galilee in 1948.

I had met Dov Yermiyahu following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 when we participated in more than one demonstration against the war. When I asked him in early 1998 about Mr. Ghazal, he remembered him, added that he

knew his brother Yonatan (Yunis), and gave me his home telephone number in a kibbutz near ʿAkka. When I spoke to Yonatan I obtained his brother's telephone number in Haifa, and it turned out that he had changed his family name to Bahrav. When I spoke to Rabinovitch (Mr. Ghazal) and told him I was a historian at Hebrew University, he quickly expressed his readiness to cooperate and to answer my questions. He did not deny the occurrence of the massacre in Majd al-Krum, but he claimed that it was the result of confusion and error. Later in the interview, he was eager to surprise me with a new and unknown bit of information about the visit by the United Nations team to the village after the massacre. He said: "Seeing as the army denied the occurrence of premeditated killing, the residents proposed to exhume the bodies of the martyrs which had been buried only a few days earlier.[114] The accompanying army officer agreed, so the villagers dug up one of the graves and brought out the body, which the UN observers photographed." Rabinovitch added that the officer stopped the exhumation of other bodies and told the observers that their mission was over, and that they had to return to their camps and their headquarters.[115]

Rabinovitch himself was not present in the village of Majd al-Krum that day; he was in the village of al-Rama, according to his testimony. He received an order to proceed to the western side of Majd al-Krum and set up a military roadblock to search the car of the United Nations team and to extract the film from the camera. Rabinovitch said he carried out his mission quickly and successfully, adding: "When the United Nations car arrived, we stopped it and asked all passengers to get out and stand to one side. After a quick search of the car we found the camera and took out the film despite the protests of the observers and their denunciations."[116]

When Rabinovitch noticed my agitation and surprise at his actions, he caught himself and said: "What? I hope you do not think that we have to allow those foreigners (goyim) to publish pictures of the atrocities for the world to see."[117] I was shocked and replied quickly: "Of course not." Nevertheless, I hurriedly concealed my anger and embarrassment and apologized that I had to cut the interview short, and promised to complete it at a later date. However, when I tried to resume the interview after several years I learned from Rabinovitch's wife that he had died, and I told her that I shared in her sorrow.[118] By sheer coincidence, I was later to meet the doctor who had treated "Mr. Ghazal" in his last years, Dr. Bashir Karkabi from Rambam Hospital in Haifa. The doctor was surprised by the stories of the Nakba that I had gathered and the role of his patient in the events at Majd al-Krum. He said that he had heard from Rabinovitch only about his Arab friends and how he helped them during and after the war in Shafa ʿAmr and other villages and towns in the Galilee.[119]

The army continued to deny the massacre which it had perpetrated in Majd al-Krum and its expulsion of hundreds of villagers during 1948–49. Many who had fled from the massacre or whom the army expelled in January 1949 "infiltrated"

back into the village and resorted to the courts in 1951, particularly the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem. In the proceedings of one case heard by the court, a contradiction between the testimonies of residents of Majd al-Krum and the allegations of the representatives the state and the military government became apparent. When the judges (Heishin, Zilberg, and Zohar) wrote their decision, they clearly stated, "The statements of Mukhtar Dhiyab Qasem Farhat . . . who told his story without fear or trepidation, are credible." But the testimony of the officer from the military government, Shmuel Pesitsky, "relies on unknown or dubious sources."[120]

## THE FATE OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE BORDER STRIP VILLAGES

Israel completed the occupation of the Galilee through Operation Hiram, and expanded its territory to the international border with Lebanon and beyond. Following a meeting between Ben-Gurion and Moshe Carmel, commander of the northern front, the prime minister wrote in his diary that half of the residents of the Galilee had moved out of the region, "and many shall leave." On the same day, he submitted a report to his cabinet to the effect that "there is no enemy in the Galilee after Operation Hiram, but there are still many Arabs in the Galilee."[121] To attain their objective, after consulting with the general staff, Carmel decided to impose a curfew on all Arab villages in the 5–15 kilometer strip along the length of the border with Lebanon. He also issued orders to the soldiers to begin expelling the residents of those villages in order to create a border strip "clean" of Arab residents. Thus, the residents of al-Nabi Rubin, Tarbikha, Suruh, al-Mansura, Iqrit, Kufr Bir'im, and Jish were ordered to evacuate their villages.[122] The residents of Muslim villages were expelled to Lebanon, but the fate of the Christian villages was slightly different.

Most residents of Jish—Christian Maronites, along with a few Muslims—who received orders to migrate to Lebanon escaped expulsion and remained in their village. The Christian dignitaries went to see Mano (Emanuel) Friedman, the representative of the ministry of minorities in the Safad region, concerning their fate. Bechor Shitrit, who headed the ministry, contacted the leaders of the state, notably Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, a leader in the ruling party, Mapai, and a specialist in Arab affairs. Shitrit and Ben-Tzvi together contacted army command in the area and managed to get the expulsion order changed. In this way, this border village escaped the fate of being uprooted which befell most border villages in eastern upper Galilee; the majority of Christians stayed in Jish, while most Muslims were uprooted, and joined the tens of thousands of refugees in Lebanon.

One of the villages which received the order to migrate was Iqrit, close to Fassuta. The Israeli soldiers had entered the village for the first time during Operation Hiram on 31 October without any incident of resistance. The villagers signed a surrender agreement, and handed over the arms and the ammunition they had in

their possession. The residents of Iqrit had put up white flags as others had done, and the correspondent of *Davar* published an article with photos two days after the event. Barely a week had passed after the surrender of the village when Israeli soldiers returned (on 6 November) and asked the residents to leave their homes and go to al-Rama, thirty kilometers away. According to the testimony of the residents, the army officer who delivered the evacuation order, Ya'qub Qarra, promised that they could return to their houses after two weeks, and to take necessities and provisions to last them through that short period. That is what the villagers did, leaving a few men in the village to guard their houses and possessions.[123] That day 126 families, numbering 616 people, were evicted.

The fate of Kufr Bir'im was no different. After the decision was taken to evict its residents, they tried, like their neighbors, to have that unjust order lifted. People were busy with the olive harvest, and they contacted their Jewish friends to rescue them from their calamity. On 7 November, Mano Friedman arrived in the village accompanied by Raful, the director of the office of minorities in Safad, and they carried out a census of the population, which totaled 1,050 people. This step reassured the residents to some extent, giving them hope that their fate might be like that of the residents of Jish; however, these hopes were quickly dashed. Friedman came back on 13 November accompanied by four soldiers, and they told the residents to leave their homes and go to Lebanon within forty-eight hours.[124] In this case also, residents were promised that the expulsion would be temporary and was for security reasons, and that they could return to their homes after a few weeks.

The residents of Kufr Bir'im feared going too far from their homes, so some residents spent the days and nights in the olive orchards and the forests near the village. However, the bitter winter conditions in upper Galilee led to children falling ill and some dying. News spread that seven children had died from the cold and harsh living outdoor conditions. Therefore, on 19 November many of the villagers agreed to go to Jish and live in the abandoned houses there. Unfortunately there weren't enough houses so some moved to the village of Rumaysh in southern Lebanon with promises from Mano that their rights would be preserved. Notables from the village contacted Shitrit who came to visit and inspected their conditions in Jish on the following day with the military governor in Nazareth, Elisha Soltz.[125] The mukhtar of Kufr Bir'im, Qaysar Ibrahim, and the priest Yusif Susan met minister Shitrit and conveyed their grievances to him; they heard more promises from the minister that the displacement of the villagers from their homes was a temporary matter and that they would return to their village soon.

After a short while it became apparent that the promises of the Israeli army officers and politicians were mere deception. On 24 November the government took a decision to ratify the decision to expel the residents of Arab villages in the strip along the Lebanese border. Ben-Gurion explained his government's policy, saying: "Along the whole border and in each village, we shall take everything

based on the requirements of settlement. As for the Arabs, we shall not bring them back."[126] Shitrit had forwarded the grievances of the residents of the evacuated villages—concerning the fact that the military government under General Elimelech Avnir had not halted expulsion operations—to the prime minister. Shitrit also complained that these operations were being conducted without his knowledge or even consultation with him.[127] Following the correspondence with Minister Shitrit, the government approved the return of the inhabitants of Kufr Bir'im from Rumaysh in Lebanon, not to their houses, but to live in Jish or elsewhere.

As the end of 1948 approached, the residents of most villages in the border strip had been expelled one way or the other; however, a few villages escaped this fate: Fassuta, Mi'lya, and Hurfaysh, as well as the Arab al-'Aramsha, in western Galilee. In eastern Galilee we have already seen that Jish remained, as did the Circassian village of al-Rihaniyya.[128] Despite Ben-Gurion's support for the army's demand that the border region be "clean" of Arab residents, the inhabitants of some villages managed to remain in their homes due to international and local pressures on the government in the final weeks of 1948. As happened in other areas in the Galilee, the residents of some villages took advantage of their connections and used procrastination and other means to remain in their villages, and they succeeded despite their proximity to the border, and despite the murders and massacres in Jish, Sa'sa', and Tarshiha.

Israel had tried to expel the inhabitants of Tarshiha, one of the largest villages in the area, but achieved only partial success. Tarshiha had over 4,000 inhabitants on the eve of the Nakba. During the occupation of the village as part of Operation Hiram, most of the residents were uprooted and forced to migrate, especially the Muslims who constituted the vast majority, so that only a few hundred residents remained, mainly Christians. The government wanted to settle some Jews from Romania in the abandoned houses, and the army put pressure on the residents to leave the village, but they did not submit to the pressure and contacted several parties asking for help, which led to their remaining in their homes.[129]

During the last few months of 1948, many of those who had been forced to migrate during or after Operation Hiram tried to return to their villages on their own; the army, on the other hand, was persistent in using various ways to prevent this from happening, particularly in those villages where most of the residents had been forced out. The army also conducted "combing" operations in the remaining villages to arrest "infiltrators" and expel them across the border once again. During the last months of the war, Israel and its army exerted a great effort to force out the largest possible number of residents of upper Galilee. However, the 'Ilabun villagers had managed to make their voice heard by the outside world, which compelled the government to allow those whom it had expelled from the village to begin quietly returning to their homes at the end of December 1948. It seems that their return, which took place gradually, was in fact one of the factors that helped some border villages to survive.

## THOSE WHO REMAINED AT THE END OF 1948

Upon completing the occupation of the Galilee and the Naqab, and on the eve of the first elections in Israel in January 1949, the number of Arabs in the Jewish state stood at 125,000. The residents of Haifa and the Galilee, who numbered around 100,000, constituted the bulk of this population. The rest lived in mixed cities and some villages in the center of the country, in addition to the Bedouins in the Naqab.[130] Based on these numbers, it is clear that the official figure of 156,000 quoted by historians and researchers prior to the transfer of the villages of the Triangle to Israeli control is inaccurate.[131] A quick glance at the map of Palestine reveals that the majority of those who remained lived in those areas allocated to the Arab state under the partition resolution. Those who remained in the cities of Haifa, ʿAkka, and Nazareth and the seventy villages in the Galilee constituted, then and still today, the nerve center of the Arab minority within the Jewish state, a state which created and imposed its own borders by force of arms and occupation.

How does one explain the success, to a considerable extent, of the Palestinians of the Galilee in foiling the expulsion plan? What is the secret of the reversal of Israeli policy which permitted the population of Nazareth and most of its villages to remain while violent efforts were made to expel the majority of the population of upper Galilee?

Under the partition resolution, the Arab state included three basic areas: the Galilee mountains in the north, the mountains of central Palestine (subsequently called the West Bank), and a coastal strip which extends from north of Isdud (Ashdod) to Rafah. The presence of the Egyptian army in the south explains why the Gaza Strip remained under Arab rule, and the presence of the Jordanian Arab Legion in the center, and the prior agreement between King Abdullah and the Zionist leadership, explains what became of the West Bank. The Galilee had no strong Arab army to protect it, nor was there an ambition on the part of states such as Lebanon to annex it either by force or through agreement. Therefore, when it became clear at the end of the war that Israel was in a position to annex the whole of the Galilee, the political and military leaderships of Israel wanted to expel the majority of the population, particularly those close to the border. It was the combined factors of geography, the demographic composition of the population, prior agreements with the Druze, and fear of an international reaction to the continuation of ethnic cleansing following the defeat of the Arab armies, that partially foiled the expulsion policy.

This chapter clearly demonstrates that the residents, and their resistance to expulsion, played an important role in their ability to remain. At the outset of the war, many Palestinians thought that leaving their homes would be temporary, and that they would return when the guns fell silent. Others believed that the Arab armies, which had entered the war in mid-May 1948, would protect them and return them to their homes. These armies had occupied regions of Palestine to which the

expellees from the center and south of the country had migrated. The residents of the Galilee, whose lands Israel occupied at a late stage, had absorbed the lessons of the experience of those who were prohibited from returning. Furthermore, the contours of the Arab defeat and the Palestinian Nakba had become apparent by the summer of 1948, as had the bitter experience of refugees in Lebanon. All of these reasons made the residents of the Galilee cling hard to their homes and villages, to avoid falling prey to what had happened to their neighbors in villages which were destroyed and residents expelled.

The Palestinians in the Galilee pocket observed that the residents of Nazareth and most of its villages had remained, along with a number of villages in western Galilee as well, particularly the Druze villages. The Druze and their villages contributed by encouraging the Galilee residents to stay in their homes and villages, through indirect and direct support. These experiences convinced them that they too could endure in their villages and homes should they be occupied by the Israeli army. The mountainous terrain played another important role in enabling residents of some villages to return easily after their expulsion, as long as soldiers did not accompany them to the Lebanese border. In addition, some who did reach south Lebanon had no difficulty returning to the Galilee with the help of guides from the border villages. We can see then that a number of factors combined to contribute to a large number of Palestinians remaining even in areas that Israel wanted cleansed of Arabs, particularly in upper Galilee.

The discrepancy between the conduct of the Israeli army in the ten-day battles in July and in Operation Hiram in late October was considerable, and cannot be explained in terms of decisions by army commanders in the field. Without Ben-Gurion's written instructions and orders to the army, Nazareth and its residents would not have escaped unscathed; the same can be said about the dozens of villages in its district. On the other hand, Ben-Gurion's position was at variance in Operation Hiram, as he wanted to complete the occupation of the Galilee without its Arab population, as we explained above. Thus the top level decisions by Ben-Gurion, the prime minister and minister of defense, played the most important role in the conduct of the army in the Galilee, a region where it did not face a real threat, and which it occupied despite the fact that it was allocated to the Arab state. The justifications and explanations that Benny Morris and other Israeli historians put forward are not at all convincing.[132] The Galilee, whose occupation was completed by the army in the final months of the war, constitutes a good test case for research into many of the generalized historical narratives in the year of the Nakba.

In the Druze village of Yanuh a bloody battle took place in which the Israeli army lost a large number of soldiers; however, neither that village nor any of the neighboring villages were subjected to killings and maltreatment of its residents, due to specific top-level orders. Morris says that the Israeli army discriminated in its treatment of different sects: "Generally speaking, Christians and Druze were treated better than Muslims."[133] This statement conceals more than it reveals about

the policy and conduct of the army instead of clarifying and exposing it fully. There were no repercussions against the Druze in their villages, even after the battle of Yanuh. Christians, on the other hand, were subjected to killings and expulsion, such as in ʻIlabun, Iqrit, Kufr Birʻim, and other villages. It is true that Christian villages received better treatment than Muslim ones, but to equate the treatment of the Druze with that of Christians is incorrect.

Morris's inaccuracy can also be detected in his conclusions about Muslims. On the heels of Operation Hiram, he wrote, for example: "Muslims had several villages left—Dayr Hanna, ʻArraba, Sakhnin, and Majd al-Krum—and their residents remained in place after the occupation and were not expelled."[134] The reader has the right to inquire, after what we learned earlier about the massacre in al-ʻAyn Square in Majd al-Krum, and the expulsion of hundreds of residents from the village (detailed in the next chapter): How can the treatment of this village be similar to that of the villages of al-Battuf? Once more, it is clear that the army did all that it could to expel most of the population of upper Galilee north of the al-Shaghur villages. Its lack of success in doing so was due to the resistance of the inhabitants and local and international reactions to the massacres and acts of expulsion, as happened in ʻIlabun and other Christian villages.

Morris amended some of his conclusions concerning Operation Hiram in his book *Correcting a Mistake*. He wrote a sort of self-criticism, saying: "I have described a chaotic situation including the absence of instructions from the center or a fixed policy, a situation in which the numerous military units acted in a discrepant manner towards the Arabs whose villages were occupied."[135] After presenting this self-criticism concerning his conclusions regarding Operation Hiram, he ended with an important statement concerning the study of the 1948 war: "In the future, researchers should pay attention to a central issue concerning the 1948 war, which is the conduct of the Haganah—the Israeli army—and the ethics of war which has been described as 'the purity of arms.'" He then added that the researcher will have to wait until documents in the army archives, and other related archives, are declassified in their entirety. As we know, many years have passed since the beginning of this century, yet the documents relating to the massacres and mistreatment of the residents have remained classified.[136] The question is how long will historians wait before taking that step, and why do they not make use of testimonies of the victims and other written sources outside Israeli military archives?

In fact, the testimonies of residents of the Galilee villages which Israel occupied in Operation Hiram sheds substantial light on this foggy picture. Eyewitnesses who were present at the time of the massacres and expulsion operations cannot forget the psychological trauma and the harm that those events caused. We can detect what the army documents conceal from the writing of Yitzhak Modaʻi, as quoted by Morris himself.[137] Those documents "admit" that the army did what it could to cause the inhabitants of central Galilee and upper Galilee to

migrate. Moda'i's research provides some answers to the question posed in this book: why did a large number of Arab inhabitants remain in that region? Namely:

—resistance by ARA officers to the migration of Arab residents from their villages and towns;
—the topography of the Galilee mountains; and
—the presence of "friendly" villages whose residents were promised good treatment and non-interference in advance.

The reference in the last factor is first and foremost to Druze villages. As a result of this policy toward the Druze in the Galilee, all members of that sect, about 11,000 people, remained, as did the residents of two villages in Jabal al-Karmil: 'Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmil. Until 1947, the Druze constituted only 1 percent of the population of Palestine. However, at the end of the war, they became a significant percentage of the 100,000 Palestinians who remained in the north of the country. Even after the inhabitants of the Triangle were placed under Israeli sovereignty (May 1949), the Druze came to constitute 8 percent of the entire Arab population of Israel. As we shall see in later chapters, the position of members of that sect was consolidated not only numerically but also qualitatively, due to the so-called "blood alliance" with Jewish Israelis.

The majority of villages which were destroyed and their residents uprooted and forced to migrate to neighboring Arab countries were Muslim villages. There were no Druze villages in the districts of Safad and Tiberias, and the number of Christians in the two cities and particularly in the villages in both districts was very small. As a result, we find that ethnic cleansing in both districts and in the district of Bisan as well was virtually total. After the expulsion of the majority of Muslims in the Galilee to neighboring Arab countries, the percentage of Christians among the remaining 100,000 Arabs in Haifa and the Galilee also rose, from 10 percent to 20 percent. The number of Christians remaining in the whole of the country was estimated at 30,000 in 1949. As opposed to the Druze and Muslims, the majority of Christians lived in the cities in the north: Haifa, 'Akka, Nazareth, and Shafa 'Amr. Even among the remaining population of the central cities, Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramla, the percentage of Christians, with a population of about 10,000, was quite high.

Whatever the circumstances and causes of the new demographic reality after the Nakba, the residents of Haifa and the Galilee held an important role in the history of the Palestinian minority in Israel. The residents of Nazareth and 'Akka and the villages in their districts maintained a high status, quantitatively and qualitatively, in the history of this minority. The fact that residents of those cities and a large number of nearby villages remained in place reinforced their self-confidence, despite their experience with the tragedies and horrors of the war. On the other hand, in the coastal region south of Haifa, and the mountainous region around Jerusalem, only small, isolated villages remained. The residents of those isolated

villages, and the remaining Arab population of Lydda, Ramla, and Jaffa, lived in the village or city centers in constant fear and isolation due to their distance from the Arab demographic center of gravity. This new state of affairs after the Nakba left its psychological, social, and cultural imprint on those who remained, manifested in the mechanisms of the struggle for survival of the Palestinian minority in a Jewish state.