

## Forced Migration Continues After the Cannons Fall Silent

Shortly after the fighting between Egypt and Israel ended in early 1949, the two states began talks on an armistice and the drawing of borders between them. Israel's signing of an armistice agreement on 24 February 1949 with the biggest Arab state consolidated its military victory. Egypt was the first Arab state to sign an agreement, followed by Lebanon on 23 March, and Jordan on 3 April. According to the agreement with Jordan signed at Rhodes, the "little triangle" area, with a population of 31,000, was transferred to Israel. Syria was the last to sign an armistice agreement, on 20 July 1949, and the uncertain period between the end of military battles and the drawing of actual borders ended. Some historians regard these agreements as the real and official end of the 1948 war in Palestine.

Civilians anywhere who are caught in the middle of battlefields are often prey to being killed or expelled, or to suffer property destruction at the hands of soldiers. The 1948 war's end and the signing of armistice agreements with neighboring Arab countries should have relieved pressure on the Palestinians in Galilee, and raised their hopes concerning reconstruction, the return of refugees to their homes, and the resumption of normal life. Such were the expectations of the Palestinians based on logic and the experience of people of the area for hundreds of years, as well as the promises made by Israel since May 1948. In addition, the state of the Jews, which was established on the basis of a United Nations resolution, was in dire need of international support. It was therefore expected that Israel would heed the December 1948 declaration of the United Nations concerning human rights and Resolution 194 which gave the Palestinian refugees the right of return and compensation for the property they had lost. Yet events contradicted the expectations of the fate-stricken people inside and outside their homeland.

Israel opened its doors to the Jewish diaspora of the world so that they could "return" and live in Israel, but slammed them shut in the face of Palestinians who

had been forced to migrate from their homes only yesterday. What is worse is what a number of Israel's leaders declared publicly after the signature of the armistice agreements: that the question of Arabs remaining in the Jewish state in the future had not been finalized, and that if Palestinian refugees were settled in neighboring states, that could become the model for ridding themselves of the Arab survivors in Israel. This was not just a matter of words; the words were accompanied by real acts of expulsion, as we shall see in the following. In addition to preventing the return of the forced migrants, thousands of Arabs were expelled from their homes after the end of the war under various pretexts. This situation of insecurity and fear of expulsion lasted for many years after the 1948 war, and intensified the sense of tragedy for those who remained.

In the summer of 1949, 160,000 Palestinian Arabs were estimated to be living in Israel under military rule.<sup>1</sup> This and other officially accepted figures in the first years of the Nakba and after conceal a complicated and painful story in the history of those who remained. Thousands of Palestinians from Galilee were expelled during that period from their cities and villages to the West Bank and other regions outside Israel's borders. Even after the "little triangle" was transferred to Israeli sovereignty, expulsion operations against the Galilee population to the Kingdom of Jordan continued. On the Lebanese front, thousands of Palestinians succeeded in returning to Galilee while Israel expelled thousands of others to Lebanon. Among the relatively well-known examples of late expulsions, carried out during the Sinai War in October 1956, was the forced migration of those who remained in the southern Hula villages. Before that, Israel had expelled a few thousand inhabitants of Majdal 'Asqalan in autumn 1950 to the Gaza Strip.

As we have seen, there was a consensus among decision makers in Israel on preventing hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes and lands, and wide agreement that "too many Arabs" had remained in the state of Israel.<sup>2</sup> At a meeting of the ruling Mapai party secretariat, others expressed similar opinions and sentiments. For example, MK Eliahu Hacarmeli said: "I am not prepared to accept a single Arab, even a single non-Jew. I want Israel to be entirely Jewish." MK Zeev Oan, secretary of Mapai, acknowledged: "I am delighted that I do not see a single Arab on the road from Tel Aviv to Haifa during my trip."<sup>3</sup> Such views and sentiments were common among security agencies, settler movements, and other Zionist institutions, which put pressure on the government to expel more Arabs. However, satisfying all of those demands would have exposed the government to internal and external pressure and criticisms. To avoid this pressure, it acted carefully, resorting to subterfuge at times or giving "security" justifications for expelling the remaining Arabs.

Ideas and plans were proposed to reduce the number of Arabs and concentrate them in limited areas. These ideas were implemented in practice by expelling Palestinians from their homes to neighboring countries or, at other times, to places

inside Israel. Just as Israel banned the return of refugees, it also banned the expellees, who were now categorized as the “present absentees,” from returning to their towns and villages. Arab towns and villages became special border districts under military rule, which separated them into closed areas ruled by the 1945 emergency regulations. In this way those who remained were considered a security problem which made them subjected to the worst kind of daily humiliation and maltreatment, which undermined their most basic human rights of travel, work, and dignity, not to mention citizen’s rights.

The question of Palestinian refugees has usually been discussed and studied at the level of international politics and Israel’s relations with Arab countries. This study will approach the refugee issue from a different perspective—as a formative experience and phenomenon that became an integral part of the history of the Palestinians who remained in Israel and affected their relations with the state after the end of the war. Despite the massive effort expended by the army and police to halt the occurrence of refugees attempting to return to their homes, labeled “infiltrators” by Israel, Israel’s success was only partial, since thousands returned to their homes and remain there. The historical literature has not dealt fully with their story, leaving much of it unknown despite its importance. Their issue is intertwined with the history of those who remained in the 1950s, as many of those who remained in the Galilee (and elsewhere) found themselves torn between their humanitarian and moral obligation to help their relatives who were returning, and their fear of punishment since Israel had criminalized the act of not informing the authorities of the presence of the “infiltrators.” Many of those who remained found themselves in a haunting dilemma of handing over their children and siblings to the authorities or going to jail and paying exorbitant penalties.

Israel’s leaders saw the departure of Palestinians from their homeland as a great achievement. Some expressed their opinion frankly, while others said they were looking for the means to rid Israel of the rest of the population in the Galilee Triangle and the Naqab.<sup>4</sup> The main argument on this subject took place inside the Zionist camp regarding the extent, practicality, and price which Israel might have to pay if it carried out collective expulsion operations after the end of the war. Moshe Sharett and other Israeli leaders were cognizant of the political circumstances behind pressure at the international and regional levels which placed limits on the forced migration of the remaining Palestinians to Lebanon and Jordan. Nevertheless, the proponents of the transfer argument continued to pressure in favor of wresting control of the largest possible extent of Arab land and leaving the smallest number of Palestinians in the country.<sup>5</sup> This is how the policy of ethnic cleansing continued for years after the 1948 war.

Ben-Gurion was the leading proponent of the policy of violent confrontation and the critical decision-maker regarding the return of Palestinians and treatment of the remaining Palestinians. Contrary to his foreign minister Sharett and the Mapam ministers, who were concerned about world public opinion, he took a firm

and decisive stand about them. In 1950 in one cabinet meeting discussion on the issue of the Arabs in Israel and the refugee question, Ben-Gurion declared frankly: "Of course we should not allow 600,000 to return; not even 600." He then threatened: "If some wish to discuss the issue of allowing Arabs to return, they will have to do so in a different cabinet."<sup>6</sup> At another meeting, in 1951, the prime minister summarized the discussion by saying: "I think it is better for us and for the Arabs that they should be in an Arab state and we should be in a Jewish state, but this will not be brought about by force unless a war breaks out. . . . If they begin a war, I do not know what we shall do then. We shall deal with that when it happens."<sup>7</sup>

The reaction of the Arab population to the Israeli policy of oppression and persecution was split between submission combined with attempting to stay in the country, and limited attempts at resistance. The communists led the open and organized political resistance to the policy of repression and discrimination against Arab citizens. This sort of resistance has been studied and illuminated in the specialized literature on the history of Arabs in Israel, but other less organized and quieter forms of local steadfastness and resistance have not been discussed, invisible to the eyes of the researchers. Many Palestinians overcame the obstacles on the road of return and found "pragmatic" paths to return to their families and homes. In confronting the games played by the authorities, those who remained used to their advantage the gaps between the jurisdictions of the various authorities amid the chaos in the aftermath of the war. Israel was more careful in dealing with members of the Christian and Druze sects for reasons connected with its regional and international policies. This sensitivity was sometimes successfully exploited to allow the return of some migrants and to prevent new acts of forced migration.

#### SHUTTING THE DOOR TO RETURN AND EXPELLING "INFILTRATORS"

The survival of some villages near the Lebanese border stymied the military authorities from their task of completely closing off the border strip and made it easier for groups of forced migrants to return without the approval or even knowledge of the authorities. The mukhtars of the villages and the collaborators sometimes found themselves caught under pressure from their families and fellow villagers. The fact that the "infiltrators" hid in Arab villages led to "combing" and expulsion operations which sometimes affected many relatives who had not left their homes during the war. Many of the new expellees were young men, so the authorities expected that the rest of their families, who were dependent on them for livelihood, would follow them. The expulsion of young men also weakened the remaining relatives under military rule and made them more liable to persecution and repression by the authorities.

Israel's security policies following the signing of the armistice agreements with neighboring Arab countries fell into three policy areas:

1. External: regarding the confrontation with the Arab states and their armies. This policy amounted to preparing the Israeli army for the possibility of a renewal of hostilities in a so-called “second round.”
2. Between external and internal: concerning the attempt of migrants to return from Arab countries to their homes and lands, in most cases for economic and social reasons, rather than for attempts at revenge against the Jews. In spite of this, Israel considered them to be a threat to its security and fought them through all available means.
3. Internal security: involving how to deal with the Palestinians who remained, whom Israel considered to be a “fifth column.” For the Jewish state, which was trying to prevent the return of refugees at any cost, the willingness of the Arabs who remained in Galilee to help their returning brethren and their children was a crime to be punished with an iron fist.

The return of thousands of Palestinians from Lebanon to Galilee did not lead to Israeli retaliation against Lebanese territory, in contrast to their reactions on the Jordanian and Egyptian fronts. About 100,000 Palestinians from Haifa and Galilee had sought refuge in Lebanon, and thousands of Palestinians continued to cross the border in both directions, as they had done in 1948. The fact that Israel completed the occupation of Galilee and signed armistice agreements did not lead to any significant change in the field along the border. The rugged mountainous terrain in upper Galilee, combined with the weak military monitoring of the border from both sides, did not make for a difficult crossing. The returnees at the beginning of 1949 were mostly expellees from the villages which Israel had occupied in Operation Hiram. After experiencing the harshness of life as refugees in Lebanon, many Palestinians tried to secure their return to their families, in towns and villages near the border. Consequently, those “infiltrators” did not engage in violent activities and, in any event, were not armed.<sup>8</sup> Essentially, violence was the tool of the Israeli army and police who tried to prevent the return to Galilee by force of arms.

The Arab press published the stories of some “infiltrators” and stressed the extreme importance of this subject in the life of those who remained in Israel in the 1950s. For example, the story of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Qadir Nabulsi, first published by *al-Yawm* newspaper,<sup>9</sup> reported that Nabulsi had “infiltrated” more than once from Lebanon to Israel in the early 1950s, and was arrested and expelled more than once, sometimes to Jenin (in Jordan-controlled territory) and at other times to Lebanon. Nabulsi claimed to have lost the receipt proving he had been registered in the census, but the authorities rejected his claim and expelled him from the country time and again. The last time he was arrested, he was detained in Haifa in preparation for his deportation once again. According to the newspaper report, Nabulsi jumped from the roof of the police station to his death. However, *al-Ittihad* newspaper, which published a lengthy story, asked: “Are we talking

about an attempted escape, or of suicide which reflects the extent of Nabulsi's despair and his decision to end his life as a result of repeated expulsion to a refugee existence?"<sup>10</sup>

The Israeli military government forces, who were acting on the basis of the defense (emergency) regulations of 1945, arrested many "infiltrators" either near the border or deep in the country and brought them to detention centers, from where military courts sentenced them to exorbitant fines and harsh jail terms. In November 1951, for instance, 195 "infiltrators" were in detention, and 148 others were indicted for crossing the border without a permit and entering closed-off military areas. In the same year, these two categories represented about 80 percent of detainees in prison.<sup>11</sup> Even two years later, at the end of May 1953, there were 341 infiltrators in jail who constituted about 30 percent of Arabs in prison at the time.<sup>12</sup> Israel did not set up special detention camps for those it described as infiltrators; they were jailed along with others in Shatta, al-Damun, and other prisons. Of course, many of the returnees managed to evade the grip of the various security agencies.

The line separating the Arab population who were registered in the census, including Arabs who had participated in the first Knesset elections in January 1949, and those whom the authorities defined as "infiltrators," was not clear. Many of the refugees who returned from Lebanon and who were pursued by the authorities were hard to identify once they reached populated villages. The military government agencies often declared curfews during which soldiers and police officers would conduct searches to find "infiltrators" and expel them beyond the borders. During these surprise searches of Arab villages, the authorities expelled many residents who had never been refugees at all. Even after the census of the population of Galilee in early 1949, the authorities did not distribute identity cards and registration receipts to everybody. Against this background, and given the attempt by the security agencies to score "successes" in their operations, citizens who had never left their homes and could not have infiltrated back were often expelled.<sup>13</sup>

General Elimelech Avnir, head of the military government in the administered areas, wrote a report on the surprise searches of Arab villages in Galilee and the number of those expelled in January 1949, which he sent to the minister of defense and the chief of staff: "Regarding our discussion on 4 January 1949, orders were given to conduct surprise searches and to check the identities of the population."<sup>14</sup> He added that the search operations were conducted in eleven villages during which 1,038 people were expelled beyond the borders. Strikingly, the number of expellees from Majd al-Krum (536 individuals) exceeded half of the total. The list of towns and villages from which people were expelled included those from the districts of 'Akka and Nazareth. Added to the numbers of those expelled, the report spoke of men "who had been arrested in order to continue investigating them and detainees who were moved to prisoner of war camps," as well as others "who had been expelled to other villages."<sup>15</sup>

The concise report did not explain why more than 1,000 people were expelled from their homes and villages in the Galilee. At the beginning of 1949, it was clear that the Israeli government and the prime minister were trying to expel the maximum possible number of Arabs from the northern villages during the interim period between the end of the war and the entry of armistice agreements into force. Some of these operations were conducted on the eve of the first elections and many were conducted afterwards. Some residents were expelled after the census, but before the registration receipts and identity cards were issued. There was no policy for the collective expulsion of Arabs from the villages of central and upper Galilee, but there was an attempt to reduce the numbers of residents, especially Muslims and some Christians. The army was the main driver of the expulsion operations and the principal agent of enforcement as the military establishment continued its war against Arab citizens in the Galilee, even after a ceasefire had entered into force. Military documents did not always explain to what region “beyond the borders” the expellees were sent, or what became of them after they were expelled from their homes.

General Avnir’s report spoke of expulsion operations in the villages of al-Bi‘na and Dayr al-Asad, but gave no precise dates and few details. According to the report fifty-nine people were expelled from al-Bi‘na, while five others were taken to the prisoner of war camp. But in neighboring Dayr al-Asad only eight people were expelled and there was no mention of other prisoners or detainees. This report, like many other military documents from the Israeli Army and Security Forces Archives, is useful to us in that it provides numbers and dates, but it is empty of details, particularly the impact of those operations on the inhabitants. In such cases, the testimonies of the inhabitants themselves about events constitute a treasure of information concerning the point of view of the victims. The use of military archives combined with oral testimonies provides us with a moving composite picture that is more truthful than one without the other.

In a report by the intelligence officer of the military government in western Galilee to the military governor of the region, dated 1 June 1949, expanded reference was made to expulsion operations from these two villages. The operation in al-Bi‘na took place on 6 January.<sup>16</sup> According to the report, “taking part were Tsvi Rabinovich, representing the Haifa command; Israeli police, military police and an intelligence unit; and a representative of the military government, Shlomo Pulman.” The report adds: “The identities of 113 men were investigated, four of whom were expelled.” This number is much smaller than the fifty-nine men mentioned earlier in General Avnir’s report. The difference may be explained by the fact that Avnir’s report was monthly whereas the report we are examining reports for a specific single operation on 6 January.

The same report by the intelligence officer refers to an operation in Dayr al-Asad on the same day. The same individuals and forces mentioned in the operation in neighboring al-Bi‘na village also carried out this operation. About the Dayr

al-Asad operation the report says: "The identities of 140 men were investigated, and sixteen were expelled along with their families, numbering sixty-two individuals."<sup>17</sup> This number is much larger than what is in Avnir's report above, and does not match the number fifty-nine from the neighboring village of al-Bi'na. The report estimates the number of infiltrators in al-Bi'na as forty, whereas the number of infiltrators in Dayr al-Asad is estimated as thirty-five. In the same document, the number of infiltrators in Majd al-Krum on 1 June 1949 is put at forty-two men. These figures clearly indicate that a "cat and mouse" game was being played between the returnees and the Israeli authorities which lasted through the entire first half of 1949 at least.

The document that the Haifa intelligence officer wrote as a summary of other operations conducted in the villages of Abu Snan, Um al-Faraj, al-Jdayde, Tamra, Kufr Yasif, al-Mazra'a, Mi'lya, al-Makr, 'Iblin, Fassuta, and Kabul, in addition to the Shaghur villages mentioned above, does not say where the expellees were sent in all cases, just in a few. In the Abu Snan (29 March 1949), Kabul (31 March), and al-Makr (11 April) operations, it was said that the inhabitants were expelled to al-Muthalath, the Triangle area. Some Druze villages were also subjected to search operations and surprise raids. Usually the objective in those cases was to go after smugglers and unlicensed arms merchants and "infiltrators" who had found refuge among their Druze neighbors. The report of the intelligence officer for western Galilee, for example, said eleven rifles were seized in the Yarka operation on 31 December 1948. In Julis a combing operation was conducted on 24 January 1949 which led to the "confiscation of ten weapons." The author of the report estimated that dozens of "infiltrators" were hiding in the houses of these last two villages.

Dozens of young Druze men enlisted in the Minorities Brigade in the Israeli army, while others worked as guides for returnees and as smugglers of commodities. The arms held by some members of the sect, and the relative immunity of their villages from surprise raids and retaliation by the security forces, enabled some Druze to pursue a career of smuggling and guiding returning refugees as a way of making a living. This complicated reality worried the military government authorities, and there were various views in the army and the government about how to deal with the Druze and the arms they possessed. Ben-Gurion settled the debate by saying that the friendship of the Druze inside and outside the country was important for Israel and ordered the security forces to be extremely cautious in dealing with members of the sect.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, it is worth mentioning what happened to the villages of Kufr 'Inan and Farradiyya, which were still partially populated after they were occupied under Operation Hiram. The remaining villagers were pressured to move to other neighboring villages, but the authorities did not wait for villagers to leave their homes voluntarily. From the report of the commander of the military government 128 villagers (a large number) "were expelled to other villages" while 64 villagers were expelled beyond the borders.<sup>19</sup> 'Awad Hasan Mansur was one of those who had

remained in Kufr 'Inan whom the army moved to Majd al-Krum in 1949. After a short stay in this village, which was crowded with hundreds of refugees from neighboring villages, he moved with his family to the nearby village of al-Rama, which was closer to his home village. Mansur testified that he had tried repeatedly, along with some fellow villagers, to return to Kufr 'Inan "but our repeated requests for permission to return to our lands were refused, so we remained as refugees in al-Rama."<sup>20</sup> The refugees from Kufr 'Inan lived in temporary shelters on top of a hill at the western entrance of al-Rama (called al-Dabba) where they lived for dozens of years, until they were permitted to build lasting and permanent homes for themselves.

#### WHOLESALE EXPULSION: MAJD AL-KRUM

The Israeli authorities conducted a census of the population of Majd al-Krum from 12 to 14 December 1948. Registration receipts were distributed to the population more than a month later, on 17–18 January 1949.<sup>21</sup> Before distributing those receipts, the Israeli security forces carried out two combing operations in the village, during which 536 individuals were expelled beyond Israel's borders, according to the report by General Avnir. The first operation was carried out on 9 January, the second on 14 January. Fortunately, a relatively large number of those included in the expulsions were still alive when I became interested in documenting and studying events in the village, so I was able to interview many of them. Their testimonies reveal many aspects of the history of the Arab minority in Israel which have been concealed and silenced in military documentation. A few also shed light on the many forms of resistance adopted by those who succeeded in returning to their homes despite the dangers.

The first large expulsion operation in Majd al-Krum was widely documented in the Army and Security Forces Archives.<sup>22</sup> A report on 9 January 1949 mentions that the objective of the operation was "arresting infiltrators and criminals in the village." The forces that carried out the operation included a detachment from the Minorities Unit and soldiers from the 123rd Battalion, ten military policemen including an officer, two soldiers, nine policemen and a ranking police officer, and representatives from military government agencies. "The village was surrounded at night and at 3 a.m. barriers were placed on all roads in and out of the village. After 7 a.m. orders were issued to the notables in the village to gather all the men over the age of twelve within half an hour. At 8 a.m. a curfew was announced, and four units began combing operations to catch anyone who was trying to hide. At the same time, men from intelligence and the police began interrogating the men."<sup>23</sup> Tsvi Rabinovich added in his report that the identities of 506 individuals were investigated, of whom 355 were deported. After the investigation and deportations "the mukhtar and notables were warned that they had to inform the authorities about the arrival of any infiltrator in the village."<sup>24</sup>

In Rabinovich's summary of the operation in Majd al-Krum, he expressed his satisfaction with "the good coordination among the forces, except for the following two incidents," complaining that "transportation did not arrive on time to transport those arrested, which prevented the transportation of 300 additional individuals." The second problem had to do with "two soldiers from the 123rd Battalion [who] took some merchandise from the shops. After a short investigation, most of the property was returned to its owners, and the above-mentioned [soldiers] will be tried." This document includes valuable and detailed information concerning the expulsions from Majd al-Krum from the perspective of the authorities and their representative Tsvi Rabinovich. However, like all the rest of the military documents, it is not concerned with news of the expellees after their expulsion "beyond the borders," or with the impact of the expulsions on those remaining. To examine the events from the point of view of the Majd al-Krum inhabitants, I interviewed many eyewitnesses of the expulsion operation. Those testimonies, some of which I had been hearing since childhood, relate the details of tribulations absent from the Israeli archives.

Before reviewing some of these testimonies, it is useful to read what the representative of the military government (Shlomo Pulman)—who accompanied the Israeli forces during the combing of the village and the investigation into the identities of villagers—wrote about the operation.<sup>25</sup> His evaluation complained about how the combing operation was carried out and about the interrogation of the inhabitants of Majd al-Krum, which differs from the Rabinovich document. This officer's letter to the military governor of the Western Galilee district included details of how the soldiers and policemen treated the inhabitants: "The treatment of the inhabitants by the soldiers was very violent."<sup>26</sup> "The operation was conducted with curses and acts of humiliation and the soldiers kicking the inhabitants, from the commander of the operation, Tsvi Rabinovich, down to the other participants in the investigation." After the investigation into the identity of one of the inhabitants ended, "when it was decided to expel him because he was a refugee in the village, he was driven out of the interrogation room, chased with curses and kicks."

The height of brutal behavior came when the soldiers reached the house of the mukhtar, Hajj 'Abd Salim Manna', who was sick that day, but nevertheless had gone to the square where the investigation into the men's identities was being conducted. He was released, and went back to his house accompanied by officer Shweili.<sup>27</sup> Afterwards, soldiers came to his house and, without hearing him out, hit him with their rifle butts and kicked him in the stomach. According to written testimony by one of the officers on the scene—which corresponds with what I had been told by the villagers about the physical and psychological violence to which they had been subjected—Hajj 'Abd Salim suffered "bruises, wounds, and internal bleeding in the stomach and liver, and he was taken to Nazareth Hospital, where he is still lying in critical condition."<sup>28</sup>

“Shlomo” also went into the issue of thefts, which showed another aspect of the treatment by the soldiers and their conduct. In his letter, “Shlomo” said that during the operation, soldiers from the 123rd Battalion broke into two shops and also stole from private homes; they took an alarm clock, clothes, and various small items “despite the repeated warnings by the unit’s officer not to do such things and to keep their hands off private property.” “Shlomo” added that after the operation had ended, “orders were issued to the military police to search the soldiers, and most of the stolen items were found and returned to their owners. But some stolen items are still missing, and complaints will be lodged by the affected parties.”<sup>29</sup> “Shlomo” ended his letter with a clear recommendation: “In my opinion we should not keep silent about such conduct and put those responsible on trial.” This letter shows that some army officers had not lost their humanity (or simply wanted to keep discipline among the troops); however, army command did not listen to the recommendation to put those responsible for disgraceful conduct on trial, according to the available documents.

After the massacre that took place in al-‘Ayn Square, dozens of young men fled to the mountains and caves out of fear of being ill-treated or killed. But many of them came back to their homes and were registered in the census of mid-December. By the beginning of 1949, hundreds of forced migrants from Sha‘b, al-Birwa, al-Damun, and other villages had sought refuge in Majd al-Krum and taken up residence there. These figures seem to explain the large number of people who were expelled from the village. A large number were, in fact, refugees the state wanted to be rid of so that they would not be able to demand to return to their villages. Others were considered infiltrators simply because they did not happen to be in the village when the census was conducted. In addition, a number of young men in their twenties were registered at the time of the census but the authorities decided to expel them from the country anyway. My father belonged to this group, so our family was expelled that day.

While my father (Husayn Salim Manna‘) was in the interrogation room with the other men, three soldiers arrived at our house, which was near the mosque. My grandmother Zahra al-Ja‘uniyya went around with the soldiers who searched the rooms in our house. When they were done, one soldier stopped in front of my mother Kawthar (who was twenty years old at the time) while she was hanging the laundry, and she did not know if the soldier was staring at her body or the gold bracelets she was wearing. At any rate, she was alarmed and called for help, and Zahra, who knew a few words of Hebrew from her childhood, yelled at the soldier, who quickly left the house with his companions.<sup>30</sup> Shortly thereafter my father arrived and asked my mother to prepare herself and her child for a long journey. My father said that married men who were to be expelled were ordered to bring their wives and children, if they had any, so that they could ride on the same military busses together. Consequently, 355 residents including men, women, and children were expelled on 9 January 1949 from Majd al-Krum.

Something resembling a miracle happened to “Abu Sa‘id” who was to be expelled from the village. He had been a friend of Haim Orbach since they had worked together at the British army camp near ‘Akka. After the soldiers led Abu Sa‘id to the bus that was to transport the expellees, he insisted on talking to the officer in charge, whom he told confidently: “Haim Orbach is coming to visit me tomorrow, and he will be very upset if he does not find me in the village.”<sup>31</sup> The officer was surprised by this statement, and he asked Abu Sa‘id again: “Is what you say true?” When the officer became convinced of what he was saying and that he was a friend of Orbach, he let him and the members of his family off the bus and sent them home. This success encouraged others to try their luck with the same officer, but they were only yelled at and cursed instead of being set free. The vehicles carrying the expellees set off westward at sunset; the people remaining breathed more freely, since the tragedy could have been even worse, and returned to their homes and families in the village.

When the military vehicles reached al-Birwa crossroads (Ahyahud today) they turned south and continued moving until they reached the lands of the village of Khubbayza near Wadi ‘Ara. There the soldiers made the expellees get out of the vehicles and fired their rifles in the air warning against any attempt to go back. Indeed no one tried to go back that night. They headed to nearby ‘Ara, where they stayed at the mosque and other places. In the days following they walked in the direction of Nablus and the refugee camps which were set up nearby, while some chose to go on to Jenin and the area around it, and from there tried to return to Galilee. Among these was my uncle Husayn ‘Ali Sa‘id (sixteen years old at the time) who arrived in Nazareth on foot from Jenin, and in Nazareth found means of transportation back to Majd al-Krum.<sup>32</sup> But most expellees reached Nablus, including my small family, and remained in the Bayt ‘Ayn al-Ma’ camp for several months. At the beginning of spring, dozens chose to move to Transjordan; the caravan reached the city of Irbid, and from there busses took them through Syria to Lebanon.

The Israeli army and security agencies carried out a new expulsion operation on 14 January 1949, one week after the first one. This time most of the expellees were refugees from Sha‘b, al-Birwa, al-Damun, and other villages, but few from Majd al-Krum. One of the expellees from the village, Muhammad ‘Ali Sa‘id Qaddah, described the expulsion operation in detail.<sup>33</sup> Qaddah recalled, “A curfew was imposed in the village, and after a close examination of the identities of the men, it was decided who would be expelled and the rest went back to their homes.” He added, “It was decided that I would be expelled because I had come back from Lebanon after I had been a refugee there for about two months. I was married and had two small daughters. The vehicles took us west and they delivered us to the region of Wadi ‘Ara, where the soldiers fired in the air and ordered us to go to the Arab side.”<sup>34</sup>

Qaddah remembered that among the expellees was Muhammad Hasan Kan‘an who was carrying a sack full of clothes. “One of the Druze soldiers who was

accompanying us had his eye on it and wanted to get hold of it before we crossed over to the other side. He ordered Kan'an to drop it, and out of fear for his life Kan'an did so and marched with his wife and daughter into the diaspora [or exile]. We arrived in an area controlled by Iraqi soldiers who helped us to find the houses belonging to the village of 'Ara.' Qaddah added: "We continued our journey the following day and arrived in Jenin and went from there to Nablus. At the 'Ayn Bayt al-Ma' camp large tents had been set up, each of which housed three families." UNRWA had begun operating and was helping refugees, so it accommodated hundreds, even thousands of them in the area. But the camp was severely overcrowded and health conditions were quite bad, so some started to look for ways to go back to Galilee; a number of expellees did go back on foot from Nablus and Jenin to their homes despite the difficulties and dangers of the way.

With the onset of spring 1949, many refugees, including hundreds of expellees from Majd al-Krum, made their way to Jordan and from there to Syria and Lebanon. The Jordanian authorities were encouraging the return of expellees from Galilee or their transport to Lebanon after signing the armistice agreement with Israel in Rhodes (23 April). The tens of thousands of refugees in the regions of Jenin and Nablus were a heavy economic burden on the kingdom, and a source of political disturbances. Some whom I interviewed said that the vehicles went from Nablus to Jerusalem and from there to Amman where they took buses belonging to al-'Alamayn Bus Company. Muhammad Qaddah (who had an excellent memory) testified that he "arrived with my family in Beirut on Thursday, 15 April 1949, on a rainy day." He added that a generous Lebanese man came to the 'Umari Mosque where we were staying and gave every refugee one Lebanese lira."<sup>35</sup> Qaddah's testimony was not the only one that referred to the generosity and kind treatment the refugees received in the Lebanese capital.

Most testimonies by the villagers of Majd al-Krum expelled in January 1949 tell of a similar route taken to the West Bank, and from there to Syria and Lebanon. Many recalled feeling lost dignity and humiliation from losing their land and homes and needing to live on the charity of others. Most who returned from Lebanon to their village later were overwhelmed by a sense of pride and self-respect because they had not submitted to the fate mapped out for them by Israel and its army. The majority of expellees were in their twenties, so they were able to endure the hardships of the road of return. After experiencing homelessness for the first time, their basic concern was for the future of their small children in the difficult conditions of life in refugee camps. The story of the return of hundreds, even thousands of those Israel had expelled from Galilee is largely missing from the history of the Palestinian Nakba. The survival of dozens of villages in Galilee played an important role in the determination of thousands of refugees to return to their homes by any means. Their determination grew in parallel with the efforts by Israeli security agencies to minimize the number of Palestinians remaining in Galilee.

When I heard the testimony of Tsvi Rabinovich who was in charge of expulsion operations in Majd al-Krum, I asked him how he chose those to be expelled. He

claimed that the men had to prove that they were permanent residents and that they were not infiltrators by showing their registration receipt from the census. He added: "All those who did not have a receipt we considered to be illegal residents of Israel whose fate was expulsion." I asked again: What was the fate of an individual who was counted in the census but had lost his registration receipt? Tsvi had an answer ready: "He was expelled. It was his problem since he had not retained the receipt."<sup>36</sup> My questions did not arise from a vacuum: in January the authorities had not yet given all the inhabitants of the Shaghur area registration receipts. In fact, the census itself had not been completed on the eve of the January 1949 elections. Even in the villages where the census had been completed, it took at least several weeks before the receipts were distributed to the villagers.<sup>37</sup>

The expulsion of 536 individuals from Majd al-Krum in January 1949 emptied the village of most of its young men. Aside from the collective punishment meted out to the expelled residents, the expulsions strongly affected those who remained in the village and even the neighboring villages. Most who remained in Majd al-Krum were either elderly or children who were original residents of the village, alongside the refugees who came from neighboring villages.<sup>38</sup> We mentioned earlier that Israel used to expel the remaining residents in some villages which had been largely depopulated in order to gain control of the land belonging to the village. At the same time, they picked certain villages to absorb the refugees, Majd al-Krum being one of these. In this manner, the policy of minimizing the number of Palestinians in Galilee and taking over the land belonging to the expelled residents at the end of the war continued. Still, hundreds risked their lives and returned to their villages and homes. Below we shall present examples of dozens, even hundreds of Majd al-Krum residents who returned from Lebanon while the chase-arrest-exile operation continued.

#### ROUTES OF AGONY: EXPULSION AND RETURN

We mentioned earlier that among the hundreds expelled from Majd al-Krum at the beginning of 1949 were "infiltrators," "refugees," and residents of the village whose sin was that they were in their twenties. Their families saw how the Israeli authorities exiled their sons who had committed no offense. When the expellees reached Lebanon, most joined the tens of thousands of refugees from Haifa and Galilee and found shelter in Beirut and in the refugee camps in south Lebanon. The distance between the camps near Sidon and Tyre and northern Galilee was short and could be traversed in a few hours. Qaddah (born in 1928) testified that he had left one of his two daughters with his mother in the village in 1949. He said he had crossed the border and returned to the village at least four times over two years.<sup>39</sup> But crossing the border and reaching his relatives was not the end of the paths of sorrow associated with return.

Qaddah testified that he was extremely careful not to be seen by any of the collaborators with the military government who used to report the presence of

“infiltrators.” But simply being careful was not enough, since information kept reaching the desks of officers of the military government concerning the presence of dozens of young men who had returned from Lebanon. When the authorities increased the penalties for harboring “infiltrators,” Qaddah built a shack out of olive tree branches in his family’s small vegetable garden and slept there so that members of his family, who were old, would not be penalized. Informing the authorities would also subject their children to arrest, torture, and expulsion, which was not even considered by the families. In the early years that followed the 1948 war thousands of Galilee inhabitants lived torn between the hope that their children would return and the agony of seeing their children arrested and expelled once again to the other side of the border.

On 6 November 1949, ten months after the last mass expulsions, a strict curfew was imposed on Majd al-Krum while an aircraft hovered overhead in an attempt to capture “infiltrators” who had fled or were in hiding. At the same time, the military government spread a rumor through its informants that “the authorities plan to distribute identity cards to everyone who had been registered in the census but had not received an identity card to date.” Qaddah testified that he had believed that rumor and had gone with good intentions to the place where the inhabitants gathered. That day, the authorities brought five vehicles which transported 250 to 260 individuals (men, women, and children) whom they exiled to the Jenin area.<sup>40</sup> Some of the expellees were not married, and they crossed the border once again from Jenin to the village of al-Marja. But Qaddah had his family (his wife and two daughters) with him, so he went on to Lebanon by way of Jordan and then Syria, and arrived in Beirut, where he remained until 1951. This large expulsion operation, which occurred one year after al-‘Ayn Square massacre, deepened the grief of the surviving residents that had beset them with the fall of the Galilee, and would last for a long time due to the continuing cascade of tragic events.

News of the mass expulsion of Majd al-Krum residents reached the ears of Maki leaders. *Al-Yawm* newspaper published an article about the expulsion of two hundred “infiltrators” from the village. *Al-Ittihad*, which quoted the news in its rival paper, went on to say that most of the expellees were not “infiltrators” but residents who had been expelled before they had received registration receipts, having gone back to the village to receive them.<sup>41</sup> The paper also relied on a news item published by *Kol HaAm* which “published the whole truth.” The communist press pointed out that the number of expellees was three hundred, not just two hundred. It stressed that the only fault of those individuals was that they had not received registration receipts from the authorities. *Al-Ittihad* added that dozens were expelled from the villages of al-Bi’na, Dayr al-Asad, and Tarshiha in the same week.<sup>42</sup> Toward the end of 1949, it seemed as though Israeli security agencies had energetically gone back to work to reduce the Arab population of the Galilee. In return, Communist Party activists intensified their uncovering of expulsion operations and scaled up their resistance to them. Their backbones stiffened after the

first parliamentary elections and their disappointment with the Ben-Gurion government's policies, the Arab communists escalated their opposition.

Qaddah monitored the news from Galilee during 1950–51, and crossed the border alone twice to visit his parents in the village. At the beginning of the summer of 1951, Hanna Naqqara brought a case on behalf of forty-eight residents of Majd al-Krum at the central court. His success in that case contributed greatly to the return of dozens of expellees from Lebanon. Qaddah testified that after he had heard news of these events, he quickly returned from Lebanon by land, and went to police headquarters in 'Akka to receive his identity card based on the precedent set by the court case. Then he went back to Lebanon to bring his wife and daughters from Shatila camp. He added in his testimony that he arrived in Beirut on their election day, and heard about the assassination of Riyad al-Sulh, the Lebanese prime minister, in Amman, on 16 July.<sup>43</sup> In Beirut, Qaddah met a refugee from the village of al-Zib (near Ra's al-Naqura) who was transporting refugees to Galilee by sea—easier and faster for children—so he struck a deal with the owner of the boats and returned that night with twelve people from the port of Tyre to Shavei Tzion, north of 'Akka.

Qaddah's testimony overlapped with what I had heard from my mother, Kawthar Manna', more than once about our return journey from the 'Ayn al-Hilwa camp: One day my father returned from Galilee and told my mother to be ready to return to Majd al-Krum that night. My mother could not believe what she was hearing; pointing to her belly she asked: "How can I walk for hours in the mountains at this advanced stage of pregnancy?" But my father calmed her fears, saying that she would not have to walk at all. She just had to not ask questions "and prepare to travel without letting the neighbors know" because if the news spread and reached the Lebanese authorities it could delay the plan. That night, we took a car from the refugee area in Sidon to Tyre, which is close to Ra's al-Naqura. Then fishing boats brought the returnees by night to their destination, and our family arrived with four others to safety near Shavei Tzion, north of 'Akka. The return trip by sea was expensive, but it spared the travelers the difficulty and danger of crossing borders on foot and risking death by being shot by border guards.

During my search for the timing of our return from Lebanon to Galilee, I was able to verify the date from multiple sources. My mother told the story—bitterly—more than once of how my father had hidden the news of her mother's death from her, which he had learned of on his last visit to the village. She added that she only discovered the tragic news after she returned to our house in Majd al-Krum. When I searched in the diaries of Muhammad Haydar (Abu Jamil) I found that he had recorded the news of the death of Mariam, the wife of 'Ali Sa'id Manna', on the main road in the village on 24 June 1951, and her burial the next day.<sup>44</sup> Thus I was able to determine that the date of our return from Lebanon was in mid-July, because my mother kept complaining that three weeks had passed since her mother's death without her knowledge. This date relied on Abu Jamil's diaries aligned

with the iron memory of Muhammad Sa‘id Qaddah, as a number of returnees remembered his arrival in the village from Lebanon on the eve of the Knesset elections, held on 30 July.

Abu Nahi was one of the hundreds of residents expelled from Majd al-Krum in January 1949. He arrived in Lebanon with a large group from the village and suffered refugee life for over two years. After Hanna Naqqara’s court success and the return of dozens of refugees from Lebanon, Abu Nahi’s relatives in the village sent him a message that he had to return quickly.<sup>45</sup> Abu Nahi, who was not married at the time, crossed the border by land without difficulty and returned to his family’s home. He and other residents hired attorney Sharif al-Zu‘bi from Nazareth to obtain their registration receipts days before the summer 1951 Knesset elections.<sup>46</sup> After the legal precedents set by the central court and the Supreme Court, dozens who had been expelled—before they had received their registration receipts and despite the fact that their names were recorded in the census—did not have to go to court a second time. In this way dozens of young men who had been expelled from the village with their families in January 1949 returned to their homes after more than two years living as refugees.

On the eve of the elections at the end of July 1951, Mapai’s Arab lists were trying to win Arab votes, which made it possible for dozens to be allowed to return through the family reunification provision. Abu Nahi and others whom I interviewed mentioned the names of relatives who had returned just before the elections “through Haim Orbach,” the intelligence officer who had been instrumental in the village’s surrender and in enabling most residents to remain. Orbach was active then in attempts to win votes for the Mapai party and the Arab lists. These testimonies, which are corroborated by contemporary written sources, prove that the expellees and their relatives who remained took advantage of legal loopholes provided by the ruling Israeli establishment to bring their loved ones back to their homes. In return “the family” would promise to vote for the ruling party and its lists.

Luck did not favor all expellees from Majd al-Krum and other villages. Abu Jamil’s diaries mention many cases where “infiltrators” in the villages were arrested and deported by the authorities to Lebanon during 1950–51. Others were less fortunate and paid with their lives for attempting to return to live in their homes or just to visit relatives. On 15 January 1950, for example, news reached Majd al-Krum that Husayn Khalil Qaddah had been killed near the border. On 31 October 1950, news spread in the village of the shooting death of Sa‘id Rafi‘ and his brother Mustafa on the northern mountain above the village of Dayr al-Asad.<sup>47</sup> In another incident on 28 May 1951, a refugee from the village of Sha‘b, who was a former resident of Marj al-Krum, was killed in a mine explosion near the Lebanese border, and two others from the same village, Ahmad Mustafa Taha and the wife of Khalid Sa‘id Kiwan, were wounded. These individuals who were fired upon, killed or wounded, had not been armed, nor had they threatened state security, but the Israeli authorities were determined to prevent anyone from returning from Lebanon to Galilee.

Still, the risks did not dissuade many. The Israeli authorities had arrested Muhammad Hikma in Majd al-Krum and deported him to Lebanon on 11 May 1950, one year before his death along the border. Abu Jamil mentions in his diaries that the news of his death (he had been killed and two others wounded by a mine planted by the soldiers) on 28 May spread throughout the village. In another case, Muhammad As‘ad Sghayyir and Husayn Sarhan were sentenced by a military court on 6 September 1951 to two and a half years in prison because of their multiple arrests for repeated attempts to return to the village.<sup>48</sup>

Collective punishment was a basic tool in the military government’s arsenal for dealing with the Arab population. Despite that, attempts by Palestinians to return did not stop. Abu Jamil’s diaries, which document events in the village, including army operations, mention the names of many of the men and women expelled that are absent from military documents. His diary reports a unique case in which the army imposed a curfew on Majd al-Krum for “seven consecutive days and nights, not allowing anyone to enter or leave the village,”<sup>49</sup> the objective being to apply pressure on the inhabitants to turn in their relatives to the authorities instead of hiding them.

Chapter 6 presents cases in which dozens of Palestinians from Majd al-Krum went to the Supreme Court to prevent their expulsion and ask to be allowed to live in their homeland. It is sufficient here to mention one of those court decisions concerning dozens of villagers whom the military government and police wanted to expel for a second time.<sup>50</sup> Those plaintiffs said that they had not received identity cards during the 1951–53 period either because they had been expelled the first time in January 1949 along with others, or because they had left the village after al-‘Ayn Square massacre, which had occurred two months earlier. The Supreme Court judges found their testimonies credible and obliged the authorities to issue identity cards to those plaintiffs. In this and other cases the justices sometimes demonstrated an understanding of the grievances of the Arab residents, documented through their testimonies and histories, that the army had carried out massacres and expelled the population, in contrast to the Zionist narrative, which later denied those actions had taken place in whole or in part. The public had to wait for decades for the documents in military archives to be released, and for revisionist historians to expose the killings and abuses during the war and after.<sup>51</sup>

#### THE REMARKABLE STORY OF THE VILLAGE OF SHA‘B

After Israel occupied Sha‘b village in Operation Hiram, it expelled the villagers, who became refugees, but did not demolish the houses. Israeli state institutions then moved other Arabs into the vacant houses. The first to be allowed to live in that village was Shafiq Abu ‘Abdu and some of his relatives from the Buqay‘i family from Damun village in western Galilee.<sup>52</sup> One of the tasks assigned to Abu ‘Abdu

and his relatives was to prevent the original inhabitants from returning to their homes. Indeed, the authorities partly succeeded in their objective for some time.<sup>53</sup> The policies of settlement organizations concurred with the directives of the prime minister's advisor Yehushua Palmon that "under no circumstances should land in the village be leased to the local population or whoever originally came from that village." In the case of Sha'b there was an additional factor, which was to exact revenge on the villagers, who had demonstrated enthusiasm for fighting during the war. Hillel Cohen, who mentions these directives and assesses the role of Sha'b in the fighting, adds that "a combat unit led by a local hero whose *nom de guerre* was Abu Is'af . . . one of the best fighting units operating in Galilee," had been active in the village.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, Abu Is'af was a local hero not just in the village of Sha'b but throughout the villages of Shaghur and elsewhere. His name crops up several times in the novel by Elias Khoury *Gate of the Sun*, which tells the story of this unit through its fictional heroes. In fact, two heroes who withdrew with their unit to the south of Lebanon became refugees and continued to strive to return to the Galilee for several years. Consequently, it is no surprise that Sha'b's villagers in Lebanon, who published a book several years ago documenting their village's history, reserved a special place in the book for Abu Is'af and his combat unit.<sup>55</sup> Who then is this Abu Is'af, whose zeal to fight was the justification the Israeli authorities used to prevent the return of the people of Sha'b to their village after the war ended and the guns fell silent?

Abu Is'af is Ibrahim 'Ali al-Shaykh Khalil (1908–2002) was one of the fighters who joined the organization of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam and took part in the 1936–39 revolt. After the partition resolution was adopted, he became a supporter of Hajj Amin al-Husayni and tried to enlist combatants and procure arms in Galilee to defend Sha'b and the neighboring villages. He took part in several battles until all of Galilee was occupied in Operation Hiram. When the operation was launched, he was in Majd al-Krum, where many villagers from Sha'b had gone, along with most fighters in his unit. The unit withdrew along with the others in the Arab Rescue Army. When the ARA was broken up, he moved to Syria and then to other Arab countries. Sha'b villagers in Lebanon say that Abu Is'af continued his activities with Palestinian organizations for a long time. He spent his last years in Damascus, where he died in 2002.<sup>56</sup>

The other hero from Sha'b in this fighting unit was Sa'id Salih al-Asadi (1918–1997), whose story was memorialized in the book *Gate of the Sun*.<sup>57</sup> The story of "Abu Saleh," who is called Yunis in the novel, begins with how his life ended, in the al-Hamshari Hospital in Sidon where he lay in a coma from which he never awakened, on 28 January 1997. Like Abu Is'af, his companion in his adventures, Sa'id Salih, took part in the 1936 revolt and the 1948 war. After Israel completed the occupation of Galilee, he withdrew with his unit, and went to 'Ayn al-Hilwa camp where he spent the rest of his life. What is distinctive, even unique, about Sa'id

Salih's story is that he went back to Galilee dozens of times from 1948 to 1956, particularly to a cave near Dayr al-Asad which Elias Khoury named the "Gate of the Sun" in his novel. In this cave Sa'id Salih would meet his wife, called "Naheeleh" in the novel, who continued to live with her children next to the elderly parents of her husband.

Al-Asadi and Abu Is'af are two examples of the role played by the people of Sha'b village in the struggle against the Haganah and the Israeli army until the fall of all Galilee. The villagers had later found refuge in the villages of al-Shaghur, Majd al-Krum, Bi'na, Dayr al-Asad, and Nahf. They were not present when the Israeli army entered Sha'b after the fall of Mi'ar on 18 July 1948. Within two days Abu Is'af had gathered the men of his unit, attacked the village, and regained control over it. His unit continued to fight the Israeli forces centered in Mi'ar and caused casualties and deaths—including an officer named Segev, for whom an Israeli settlement in the area was later named. The cease-fire was not observed in the area between Mi'ar and Sha'b,<sup>58</sup> and Abu Is'af's unit suffered a large number of casualties, including dozens killed among the combatants from the village and the volunteers in the ARA.

A number of Supreme Court decisions supported the oral testimonies of the inhabitants of Sha'b. One of these rulings stated: "Up to Operation Hiram at the end of October, the village lay for several months between the front lines of the IDF and the Rescue Army, so it was unpopulated except for some elderly people."<sup>59</sup> In the same ruling as well as other documents, it was mentioned that most of the inhabitants had become refugees in neighboring villages in al-Shaghur region, lying between Majd al-Krum to the west and Nahf to the east. Near the end of October these villages were occupied by Israeli forces, who tried to evict their original inhabitants as well as those who had taken refuge there. But most of those evicted from Sha'b remained in the region and engaged in a constant struggle to return to their homes in their own village—until it was declared a closed military region in April 1951.<sup>60</sup>

After the Israeli authorities enlisted the help of Shafiq Abu 'Abdu and his relatives to prevent the villagers from going home, some members of the Fa'ur family, who were Abu 'Abdu's in-laws from Sha'b, were allowed to return to the village, despite this being inconsistent with the general policies of the authorities. The authorities devised a plan to relocate hundreds of residents of the villages of Krad al-Baqqara and Krad al-Ghannama (south of Hula) and house them in the empty houses in Sha'b.<sup>61</sup> But once the door to return was opened to some Sha'b villagers it became difficult for the state and its institutions to close it completely to others.

In one of the cases pleaded before Supreme Court justices Olshan, Rossmann, and Landau, Muhammad Nimr al-Hawwari represented eight villagers from Sha'b, plaintiffs against the 'Akka police inspector and others. The proceedings of 1953 continued a preliminary decision issued on 1 January of the same year.<sup>62</sup> The

eight plaintiffs testified that they had identity cards in their possession, but that the military governor of the Galilee in Nazareth had ordered them to leave the village within fifteen days, and if they did not do so he would expel them by force and bring them before a military court. As we mentioned earlier, Sha'b was declared a closed military area (under article 125 of the emergency regulations of 1945) to prevent the population from returning. However, the eight pleaded that they were residents of the village from the days of the Mandate and had remained there until its occupation in October 1948. They admitted that they had left their homes for a few days and had hidden in the surrounding mountains, but had returned there before it was declared a closed military area in 1951.<sup>63</sup>

In the discussion of the case of the eight plaintiffs, it emerged that "after the village was occupied, a single Arab, Shafiq Abu 'Abdu, had been allowed to live there, and he was not from the village of Sha'b," and it also emerged that he had been granted the right to cultivate the lands of the village, and that the plaintiffs, at least some of them, had been working for him on those lands. The judges added that "there is a basis for saying that this person is well-connected with the authorities." It was also mentioned that his brother was the mukhtar of the village, and according to accusations by the residents, the two used to mistreat the villagers and take advantage of their connections with the military and civilian authorities, so that they became the ultimate decision makers in the village. The residents added in their charges that the above-mentioned Shafiq used to assault them and force them to work for him for very low wages, and when they objected, he would threaten them with dismissal. In view of this, they testified that the attempt to expel them should be seen as part of a conspiracy by their employer in which he accused them of returning to the village after 1 April 1951, when it was declared a closed military area.<sup>64</sup>

Those eight plaintiffs were not the only ones to have recourse to the Supreme Court from among the inhabitants of Sha'b.<sup>65</sup> The deliberations in this case shed light on an aspect of the use made by the authorities of the testimonies of mukhtars who collaborated with Israel in general and the military government in particular. One of those, as we said, was the brother of Shafiq Abu 'Abdu, who was one of the defendants. The judges said of Abu 'Abdu that he and his brother, the mukhtar, were "well-connected with the government"; the ARA had condemned Shafiq Abu 'Abdu to death, but he had been released from jail in Nazareth after the city fell to the Israeli army. The brothers admitted in their testimonies that they had a special relationship with the Israeli army authorities, and they had therefore been allowed to live in Sha'b and lease land there. These court testimonies from the early 1950s correspond to what the elderly villagers recalled about the activities of Abu 'Abdu and his men who were supported by the authorities.

Shafiq Abu 'Abdu admitted under investigation that he was present when the residents of Sha'b were being registered in mid-1949, and that registration had taken place in the house of his brother, the mukhtar. He added that "Not everyone who came to register had in fact been registered, only those who had received a

prior permit to live in the village, based on lists in the possession of the military government.” In commenting on Abu ‘Abdu’s statements, the judges noted that “he did not present such lists to the court during the investigation.” They added: “We are not confident that the mukhtar and his brother did not play a role in the failure to register villagers whom they did not want to help.”<sup>66</sup> These and other statements by the Supreme Court judges concerning the testimonies of mukhtars and representatives of the military government during the deliberations in courtrooms highlight some of the methods used by the military government to reward those who were closely connected to them and to punish those who were unwilling to cooperate with them.

The Sha‘b villagers gave examples of how Abu ‘Abdu and his brother exploited their strong connections to the authorities to extort money from them. In this connection the judges wrote in their decision that they would like to draw the attention of the legal councilor to the need to “examine what is below the surface in Sha‘b and to enforce justice if it turns out that the above accusations are true.”<sup>67</sup> Regarding the demand by the Sha‘b villagers to be recognized as inhabitants of the village, the court agreed partially (five individuals out of the eight). In this way the villagers showed Abu ‘Abdu and his brother the mukhtar that they were not the ultimate decision makers, despite their close connections with the authorities. Most of the people of Sha‘b continued to live as refugees in Majd Krum and Dayr al-Asad and other villages in the area, but within a few years dozens had succeeded in returning to Sha‘b and living in their own homes despite Abu ‘Abdu and his brother the mukhtar.<sup>68</sup>

The story of another refugee from Sha‘b exposes some of the methods used by the authorities in dealing with the people, and sheds light on the suffering of the inhabitants who were forced to live away from their village for years. Among the papers of attorney Hanna Naqqara was a letter to the military governor from Sa‘id Husayn ‘Abbas, who lived in Majd al-Krum.<sup>69</sup> ‘Abbas wrote, explaining his case: “When the Israeli authorities occupied our village, Sha‘b, I left the village and went to Wadi Sha‘b near the Sawa‘id Arabs. I had a flock of about 45 goats. About five days after the occupation, while I was wandering in the above-mentioned valley with the goats, Ibrahim, who was in charge of Sha‘b and Fayyad Sulayman al-Heibi from Mi‘ar village, who now lives in Kabul, came by and started shooting at me and the goatherds.” Sa‘id ‘Abbas added: “The shooting resulted in my being hit in the leg . . . at which point I fell down, and they took the goats and went off in the direction of Sha‘b village.”

‘Abbas also wrote that after he was wounded “Husayn Hamid al-Ayyub and Mahmud Abu Dalleh came and moved me to a cave near the above-mentioned Wadi Sha‘b, where I remained for two and a half months, until I heard that there were some employees registering the inhabitants of the villages. I went to al-Bi‘na and found them handing out receipts to the inhabitants. I asked them to register me, and they instructed me to go to Majd al-Krum and wait there for them to return from al-Bi‘na. I went to Majd al-Krum and waited for five days but they did

not come, so I went back to the cave and was left unregistered. Six months later I went to my uncle's wife's house in Majd al-Krum. That night curfew was declared, and I was arrested and exiled to a neighboring Arab state. I came back after just one day, and I alternated between staying in the mountains and going to villages from time to time. Later I was arrested, and they took me to the Lebanese border and left me at al-Mansura Bridge.”<sup>70</sup>

Abbas added in his letter to the military governor, “I was away just for one day and then I came back. I used to spend most of my time in the wilderness and sleep in the cave. While I was wandering in the wilderness, I found two rifles, one Ottoman and the other British. I handed them over to a police officer, Shweili, in ‘Akka. The surrender of the weapons took place through Hamad ‘Othman.”<sup>71</sup> Abbas thought that this action on his part would help redeem him, but to no avail. He ended his letter by saying: “For more than a year and a half I have not left the country. So, I am appealing to Your Excellency to look into my case and issue a just ruling by granting me a permanent residence permit in the venerable state of Israel.”<sup>72</sup>

This document—unique among the collected papers of attorney Naqqara in Haifa—was in a brown cardboard file, on the cover of which was written “Husayn Sa‘id ‘Abbas from the village of al-Bi‘na v. the Ministry of the Interior,” which indicates preparations were being made to bring a court case. My attempts to locate the rest of the papers related to the case failed, but the presence of the file might indicate that the military governor had not approved ‘Abbas’s request, and he sought out the attorney Naqqara so that he might plead the case in court. Without the rest of the papers from the ‘Abbas case it is difficult for us to know what happened after that. Nevertheless, the content of this unique document sheds light on the difficult living circumstances of many inhabitants of Galilee, particularly those who were not registered. Time and again they tried all ways and means available to stay in their homeland and not to surrender to forced migration and expulsion.

Let us go back to the story of the Sha‘b villagers who saw others settle in their homes and plant their fields, from which the authorities had expelled them. They did not accept that fate and tried to change it; occasionally their efforts bore fruit, and some were allowed to live in their village. Also some of the residents of the al-Hula villages who had been relocated by the authorities in Sha‘b asked to be returned to their original villages.<sup>73</sup> Despite these partial successes, most of the villagers from Sha‘b remained refugees in Lebanon and Syria, such as the officers in Abu Is‘af’s unit. The majority of expellees who had sought refuge in neighboring villages, thus becoming part of the “present absentees,” did not succeed in returning to their homes in the 1950s. But some did return to Sha‘b gradually after the cancellation of military rule, through the land swap agreements with the Land Office in Israel and other state institutions.

Like the hero of *Gate of the Sun*, Ahmad Mutlaq Hamid also joined Abu Is‘af’s unit. Following the retreat of the unit to South Lebanon and then Syria, Ahmad

Mutlaq first remained with his comrades in the diaspora, while his wife and his parents were in Majd al-Krum. He decided to return to the Galilee, and the authorities arrested him twelve times, according to his testimony.<sup>74</sup> They would sometimes expel him to the Jenin area, but most frequently to south Lebanon. The last time he was arrested and sentenced to two years in jail. After his release (in 1961) Majid al-Fahum of Nazareth helped him to obtain an identity card, and he returned to live with his parents in Majd al-Krum until September 1982, after which he returned to Sha'b with his family.

Finally, we shall tell the story of a villager from Sha'b, Salih Ibrahim Ghanim, who lived in Majd al-Krum and made great efforts to return to his home and village. One of the documents he submitted to the Supreme Court, in a case he brought against the military governor in 1956, showed that he had leased agricultural land in the villages of al-Birwa and Sha'b, and he occasionally received permits to travel outside Majd al-Krum to visit his lands there.<sup>75</sup> At a certain point, Ghanim decided to live once again with his family and his plentiful livestock on the land of Sha'b. According to his testimony, he lived in Majd al-Krum until 12 February 1954, long after Sha'b had been declared a closed military area. That was why his appeal to the military government for a permit to reside permanently on his property in Sha'b was rejected. At that point he appealed to the Supreme Court, which turned him down and fined him 75 liras to be paid to the defendant and in court costs.<sup>76</sup>

The story of Sha'b and its people is one of the most difficult among Galilee villages and the most egregious. In the final analysis, the village was not torn down and did not become one of the destroyed and depopulated villages, yet most of its population remain refugees in Israel and outside it to this day. Many who were allowed to return to live in Sha'b were considered refugees, and were forced to rent their lands from the state land office. In addition, Israel settled refugees from other villages in Sha'b, and the village became a refuge also for those expelled from their lands and homes from villages south of al-Hula.

This chapter's review of general and personal cases of the inhabitants of Sha'b is not a substitute for a serious academic study of the village's history. I hope that one day an Arab academic will carry out such a study.

#### EXPULSIONS CONTINUE IN THE NAME OF SECURITY AND COMBATTING "INFILTRATORS"

At the beginning of 1949, there were six Arab villages left near the Lebanese border, in spite of the army's plans to expel the inhabitants of all Palestinian villages along the border strip. Still the efforts to uproot those remaining villages and to settle Jews on their lands did not stop. Tarshiha had been emptied of most of its population (4,000), leaving a few hundred residents, the vast majority of them Christians.<sup>77</sup> Many families who feared retribution from the Israeli army found

refuge in neighboring villages (mostly Druze). Indeed, many of the remaining Tarshiha residents were first registered in the villages of Kufr Smei', al-Buqay'a, and others. Those villagers kept in touch with the few remaining residents in the houses of Tarshiha following its occupation, and began to return gradually in November 1948.

The soldiers gathered the remaining inhabitants of Tarshiha in and around the church, imposed a curfew on the rest of the village, and proceeded to systematically rob the contents of the vacant houses. The soldiers entered the houses and emptied them of everything useful and of value, tossing broken furniture outside; the list of war loot included oil, olives, wheat, cotton, furniture, and dried tobacco.<sup>78</sup> Tarshiha was known for the volume and quality of its tobacco, and the dried leaves were ready for sale when the authorities snatched the harvest from the houses. The plunder of Tarshiha houses was similar to what took place in the neighboring Arab villages, even those which were partly populated during and after the war. This subject—the organized and unorganized looting of the surviving Arab villages—has not received the attention it deserves from researchers.

Yusif Nahhas from Tarshiha was a worker in the Dubek Cigarette Company and the company's representative for the purchase of tobacco from the villagers for over a decade before the Nakba. When the village was bombed and occupied, Yusif left his house and sought refuge in the neighboring village of al-Buqay'a. A man named Farraji and his son Elie, who used to trade with the people of Tarshiha for tobacco, searched for Yusif. They found him and asked him to return to his village so that he could resume working with them. On the same day, 1 November 1948, Farraji wrote a recommendation letter by hand in Hebrew stating that Mr. Nahhas was an old and faithful employee of the Dubek Company.<sup>79</sup> Farraji and his son, who were on good terms with the authorities, arranged for Yusif Nahhas to live in one of the beautiful vacant houses in Tarshiha, and it became his duty to collect tobacco from the abandoned houses for the company free of charge. Jamil, Yusif's son, testified later that he returned from Lebanon and helped his father in his work for the Dubek Cigarette Company. Thus economic/trade motives sometimes helped inhabitants of Galilee to stay or even to return to their homes and villages.<sup>80</sup>

There were a few soldiers in the streets of the village to prevent the return of expellees from Lebanon, but they were not totally successful in their mission, particularly late at night. Dozens of expellees from the village who had sought refuge in neighboring villages returned gradually and went back to living in their houses. Anis Bishara (Abu Salim) was one of them. He said in his interview that he happened to return on a Sunday, so he went directly to the church, intending to leave with the mass of worshippers and go home.<sup>81</sup> But at the entrance to the church he met Mr. Butrus, who was known for his collaboration with the army and for turning in "infiltrators." Except that this collaborator surprised Abu Salim by saying: "Don't be afraid, enter the church." And in fact he did enter and afterwards he went to his house as he had planned, and was counted in the census of the village and continued to live there until he died.

What happened to the Hawwari family in Tarshiha stands out as stirring and distinctive from all of the similar stories from the Nakba. Ten members of the family were killed during the aerial bombardment of houses in the village carried out by Abie Nathan—who later became a famous activist for peace between Arabs and Jews. Despite the tragedy that befell the family, the members who survived took refuge for several months in the neighboring village of Kufr Smei' and were registered there before they went back to their homes in September 1949. However, attempts by other members of the Hawwari family to return from Lebanon did not succeed and they were exiled once again beyond the borders.<sup>82</sup> Fatma Hawwari was grievously wounded during the aerial bombing of the family home, and she left Tarshiha to Sidon and then Beirut to receive treatment; at the end she returned home to her village through the Red Cross in 1950. She continued to receive treatment in Israeli hospitals after her return but her condition did not improve a great deal and she remained paralyzed for many years.<sup>83</sup> Fatma and other members of her family were determined to live in their homes and on their lands despite being expelled multiple times. Their stories serve as examples of the great price paid by many who remained in Galilee.

Jibra'il Bishara, imprisoned by the ARA for nearly three months, was released from jail on 6 December 1948. Jibra'il wrote in his memoirs that he left for Beirut where met his brother Hanna and found dozens of Tarshiha inhabitants who used to meet at a hotel near Martyrs' Square.<sup>84</sup> After a few days he decided to return to Tarshiha with some people from his village. This group crossed the border easily, went to Fassuta and from there to Tarshiha. Jibra'il did not mention encountering any problem on their return journey, even after they arrived at the village. When the Israeli authorities decided to record the names of the villagers, Jibra'il even became a volunteer census worker as did his brother, who had also returned from Lebanon.<sup>85</sup>

After the names of the villagers were recorded, expellees from Tarshiha continued to return from Lebanon and other places. The return of hundreds of villagers did not go unnoticed by the security forces, who decided to put a stop to this phenomenon and to expel the “infiltrators.” A few days after the census was concluded, a curfew was imposed on the village and the residents were asked to come to the local council building, where three officers called out people's names according to lists they had and asked them to surrender the weapons in their possession. After the weapons were collected, those whom they considered to be “infiltrators” were taken to rooms on the side along with people whom the authorities accused of participating in the war against the Jews. These were expelled even if they were registered in the village census. Jibra'il Bishara recorded in his memoirs that the expellees were taken to the Jordanian border. Other sources confirm that about 130 people from Tarshiha were expelled on 16 January 1949.

The older residents of Tarshiha remember two expulsion operations affecting villagers. The first was the 16 January operation when the soldiers combed the village, searched houses, and arrested 33 heads of families along with 131 family

members (the aged, women, and children).<sup>86</sup> In the same operation another 30 individuals were expelled from neighboring Ma'liya, including historian Elias Shoufani (who was sixteen at the time) who described the procession of the caravan of forced migrants in his memoirs.<sup>87</sup> The expellees were taken to Majjidu (Megiddo), near Wadi 'Ara, from where they went on foot to Nablus, and then travelled to Amman, where they received help from the Catholic Patriarch 'Assaf. Like many of those expelled from the Galilee, the Tarshiha residents also continued on from Amman to Syria and Lebanon. Shoufani wrote that he and a number of his friends returned to their homes in Mi'lya. About three months after his return he was able to obtain an identity card with the help of Melkite Bishop Hakim, who helped hundreds of members of his sect to settle anew in Haifa and Galilee.

A few days after the expulsion of "infiltrators" from Mi'lya and Tarshiha, on 21 January 1949, a governmental committee took up the question of transferring the inhabitants of Tarshiha from their village to somewhere else. Yosef Weitz proposed moving the farmers to neighboring Mi'lya, while the rest preferred 'Akka. General Avnir, the military governor, proposed moving everyone to Majd al-Krum. However, the majority of the members of the committee chose to transfer the inhabitants of Tarshiha to Haifa or 'Akka. In the field, intensive efforts were made to convince the inhabitants to move voluntarily. It appears that the authorities predicted at that time that transferring part of the population a week in advance, combined with the attractions of city life on the other, would produce the desired result. Weitz, for example, believed that the entire village had to be depopulated so as to enable 1,000 Jews to settle there.<sup>88</sup> However, the government feared the international reaction to forced removal of the population and continued efforts to convince the residents. But the majority of villagers, with the communists in the vanguard, refused all inducements and maintained their right to live in their village.

Even so, pressure continued to be applied on the inhabitants. Bishop Hakim tried to convince those left in Tarshiha, most of whom belonged to his denomination, to accept moving somewhere else. In early June 1949, Hakim came to the village to meet the inhabitants and promised that he would try to settle them in 'Akka or anywhere else they chose.<sup>89</sup> However, the Tarshiha villagers were neither tempted by Bishop Hakim's proposals nor convinced by his implied threats, and were adamant about remaining in their village. Indeed, hundreds of villagers remained in Tarshiha despite the continued planning and work by the security agencies to uproot them along with the other Arab villages on the border with Lebanon.<sup>90</sup>

Jibra'il Bishara met with Knesset member Tawfiq Tubi in February 1949 and explained the circumstances of the village to him. Tubi promised to follow up the case and to bring it up in the Knesset. Consequently, Tubi conveyed news of the attempts by the authorities to expel the villagers of Tarshiha to representatives of the United Nations in the region. Some UN personnel came to visit the village

to check on the veracity of the news, but their military guide denied there was such a plan. Even Ben-Gurion, in his answer to Tubi's questions, denied any knowledge of orders being issued to expel the inhabitants of Tarshiha. In December 1949, there was talk of expelling the inhabitants of Tarshiha and the villagers of al-Jish, Hurfaysh, Fassuta, and Mi'lya as well, which Ben-Gurion and most ministers in his cabinet approved, but others opposed, mainly Moshe Sharett.<sup>91</sup> The final outcome was that Tarshiha and the other villages survived.

The introduction of "new arrivals" into the houses of an Arab village in the Galilee while some of the original villagers were still living there was a unique event. The remaining villagers in Tarshiha did not object to the presence of their new neighbors out of fear of the reaction of the state; in fact, some common interests and cooperation arose at times between the two sides, new good relations that alarmed the authorities,<sup>92</sup> as many of the remaining inhabitants of Tarshiha had the skills, such as construction, carpentry, and ironworking, needed by the new arrivals. The military governor exploited those with these skills to repair and reconstruct the houses in which Jews were settled. Some of those I interviewed in Tarshiha testified that the army did not remunerate them for this work, but they did not object, hoping that this would help them to prevent the expulsion of the Arab population. It seems that this actually contributed to allowing them to stay, but the more important factor was that hundreds of those who remained in Tarshiha were Christians.

To this day the people of Tarshiha remember the good neighborly relations that were established between the newcomers from Romania and the original inhabitants who remained in the village. The fundamental problem lay with the authorities, who confiscated houses and land for the sake of the settlers, some of whom behaved as the new masters of the country.<sup>93</sup> A few cases occasionally reached the Supreme Court; for example, Fahd Mikha'il Khalil complained that his name was registered in the village census, and he received registration receipt no. 93767. He added that he continued to live in his house which was registered in the name of his grandfather until May 1949,<sup>94</sup> when the military governor asked him to leave his house and move to another house in the village; so he surrendered his keys to the authorities. This action was a step in what the judges called "Reconciling the residence of Jews and Arabs in Tarshiha by the Military Government."

A Jew by the name of Zalmanovich lived in Fahd Khalil's house until 12 August 1953. On that day, as he recounted, "Zalmanovich evacuated the house and gave his friends the key to the house, and they sent them to the plaintiff." Once Fahd Khalil received the keys, and fearing for possible damage to his house, he moved in with his family on 14 August 1953. The next day the police came and forced him out with his furniture, but the plaintiff returned to live in his house once more, and the police forcibly removed him once again. Consequently, he went to court asking that the police stop forcing him out of his house. But the court refused and ruled that the house had become the property of the state, and that the police

had acted legally.<sup>95</sup> This court decision is an example of decisions by the Supreme Court legitimizing the unjust laws enforced on the remaining Palestinians.

### CONDEMNING AND RESISTING FORCED MIGRATION

The condemnation of forced migration by the communists increased, as did their resistance to it, following the first parliamentary elections. Maki's success in these elections in Haifa and Nazareth and the Galilee villages consolidated the position of the communists among those who remained and raised the ceiling of their expectation that the party's representatives would defend them. As we saw earlier, MK Tawfiq Tubi and the party press condemned and fought against the expulsions. The reaction of the communists and their press to the combing operations and the expulsion of hundreds of residents from Kufr Yasif on 1 March 1949 was strong.<sup>96</sup> It turned out later that most of the expellees from the village were refugees from 'Amqa and Kuwaykat, and only a few were original inhabitants.<sup>97</sup> The reason for the expulsion was that the expellees had not been registered in the census conducted in Kufr Yasif in November 1948. As we have seen repeatedly, all of those whose registration in the Galilee village census could not be proven were subject to expulsion and deportation.

The expellees from Kufr Yasif went to the village of Salim which was under the control of Iraqi forces, according to a UN observer who wrote in his report that "the Jews stole their jewels and the money they had with them."<sup>98</sup> The Israeli soldiers fired over the heads of the expellees so that they would panic and speed up their crossing to the Arab side. Charles Freeman, a Quaker relief activist, was a witness to the expulsion from Kufr Yasif. He had arrived at the village before the expulsion operation with a truckload of food supplies for distribution to the refugees. Freeman said in his testimony that 239 individuals were expelled from the village. The people of Kufr Yasif tried to prevent the expulsion but could only save a few, and hundreds were taken in truckloads and expelled from the country.

*Al-Ittihad* newspaper wrote about the expulsion operation in Kufr Yasif with anger and condemnation; the title of the article questioned whether there was a premeditated attempt to expel communists from the village. The paper condemned the expulsion of hundreds "despite their participation in the elections." The thing that provoked the ire and bewilderment of the paper more than anything else was the fact that "the authorities arrested a large number of members of the National Liberation League and put them in the cars."<sup>99</sup> Thus the event in Kufr Yasif elicited a powerful backlash. But as we saw in this chapter, it was not the first nor the last operation of its kind. The paper gave this subject considerable coverage because the communists feared that the event could be an indication of a change in the government's policy towards the communists after the elections.

The second time that Maki's press showed interest in such an incident was a similar combing and expulsion operation in Nazareth on 18 June 1949, although

not a single communist in the city was affected. But *al-Ittihad* stressed that it had provoked a wave of condemnation and a strike declaration, and emphasized that popular gatherings had taken place in the city, with two leaders of the party, Saliba Khamis and Mun'im Jarjura, addressing the crowds.<sup>100</sup> In addition to the communists, the operation of expelling the inhabitants of the eastern quarter of Nazareth was condemned by the activists in Mapam. This position was echoed in '*Al Hamishmar* which mentioned that women and children were detained for eight hours under a blazing sun. Even Moshe Sharett objected to Ben-Gurion over this operation in Nazareth, and expressed fear of the repercussions of the events on the image of Israel in the world.<sup>101</sup> Sharett asked the prime minister and defense minister to conduct an investigation into what occurred in this operation and the harsh treatment of the population by the soldiers, with no discrimination between the common people and the notables. However, the army representatives denied the charges against them, and the deputy military governor of Nazareth only admitted that the detainees "had been left for several hours without water to drink."<sup>102</sup>

The communists also raised in the Knesset the question of forced migration. Near the end of 1949 Tawfiq Tubi placed the issue of "army searches in Arab villages" on the agenda.<sup>103</sup> In a strongly worded speech, he presented members of the Knesset with the details of the Arab expulsion operations. He began with a reference to the report in the press about the "expulsion of five hundred infiltrators," and he quoted some statements in the Hebrew press in praise of "the good conduct of the army." He commended that those statements were "untrue, false and shameful." He then moved on from generalities to the specifics of what had happened in Majd al-Krum, pointing out, "Among the expellees from this village are two hundred men and one hundred women and children who do not have registration receipts, but they are citizens who never left their country." He added: "They were registered in the village census, but the authorities delayed giving them registration receipts. The husbands of many of the expelled women have registration receipts and identity cards."<sup>104</sup>

Tubi continued his hard-hitting speech by saying that it was difficult to speak of humane treatment by the army units which carried out the expulsion: "Some cases I heard of during my visit to the village are simply a stain on the reputation of those responsible in the Israeli government." Tubi then went on to talk about the expulsion operations in Shafa 'Amr, Dayr al-Asad and al-Bi'na. He concluded by saying: "I propose that a parliamentary committee be formed to investigate these actions, which are condemned by most members of the Knesset." His speech caused a strong reaction from the prime minister and defense minister who asked to respond to the speech and the proposal to set up a parliamentary investigating committee.

To begin with, Ben-Gurion expressed his astonishment at the way the Knesset session was being conducted, which allowed Tubi's statement to be heard from the Knesset podium. In a defensive-aggressive speech, he accused Tubi of maligning the state of Israel and its army, thanks to which "members of minorities have the

freedom to sit here on a footing of equality.”<sup>105</sup> Then the prime minister went on the offensive, saying: “This is not the first time that Tubi engages in such defamation,” adding: “This defamation is just the continuation of the incitement which his party has carried on for many years, in cooperation with the Mufti.”<sup>106</sup> Then Ben-Gurion asked that “this defamation” be stricken from the Knesset record, and he asked the Knesset committee “to use all means possible to protect the dignity of the Knesset from this out-of-control behavior.”<sup>107</sup> During the stormy debate, Ben-Gurion, who was seething with anger, attacked Tubi, saying: “Shut up. You are sitting here thanks to us.”

The expulsion of the population from Galilee continued, and the communists were almost the only ones who resisted these actions, although occasionally some protesting voices from the Zionist left could be heard as well. Yosef Waschitz, mentioned earlier, wrote in his party’s paper *‘Al Hamishmar* that the term “infiltrator” now corresponds in the Israeli dictionary to “killer and robber.”<sup>108</sup> The security forces usually denied any accusations about their activities in the expulsion of Arabs from the country. Moshe Dayan’s opinion concerning the presence of Arabs in the country was that they were a “fifth column.” He said in a meeting of the ruling Mapai party:

The policy of the party must make clear that we consider the fate of this population, which consists of 170,000 Arabs, in the country as still undecided. I hope that in the next few years there will be an opportunity to transfer those Arabs out of the land of Israel. As long as the shadow of this possibility remains open, we must do nothing that conflicts with it. It is probable that when we settle 700,000 refugees there will be an opportunity to repatriate those as well. It is possible that we may find an Arab country, or Arab countries, which may be willing, with international support, to settle the Arabs elsewhere. At that time there will be approval to transfer those residents.<sup>109</sup>

Nor was Dayan alone in supporting the expulsion of Arabs from Israel and settling them in Arab countries like the other refugees. The military governor Colonel Emmanuel Moore claimed in 1950 that “all the people who live in Zion . . . do not want Arabs for neighbors.”<sup>110</sup> Chief of staff Yigael Yadin also supported the transfer of the Arabs from Israel that year. During a consultation with Ben-Gurion on 8 February 1950 he declared that “an Arab minority in our midst constitutes a danger in times of war as in times of peace.”<sup>111</sup>

Since 1952 ideas had been put forward for expelling Arabs from Israel to Libya and Argentina.<sup>112</sup> Although the army had played the main role in expelling Arabs from the country by force during and after the war, the foreign ministry, HaKeren HaKayemet, and other civilian organizations shared in devising plans to expel the remaining Arabs. The objective of these plans was to encourage the emigration of educated urban Palestinian businessmen as well as villagers who had relatives outside the country. The ideas were not discussed in secret, but unashamedly in public and in the media. The Histadrut newspaper *Al-Yawm* encouraged

the publication of articles and opinion pieces that promoted the emigration of Arabs whereas *al-Ittihad* replied to these voices with strong condemnations and accused the authors of treason and collaboration with the senseless policies of the government.

In the early 1950s, for example, the idea was discussed of the absorption of Palestinians in post-colonial Libya under the new monarchical rule established by King Idris in December 1951.<sup>113</sup> Moshe (son of Eliyahu) Sasson, who was a recognized expert in Arab affairs, announced a plan along these lines in a letter to Foreign Minister Sharett. The letter mentions Muhammad Nimr al-Hawwari as one of the Arab leaders who had expressed support for the idea and who was willing personally to immigrate to Libya.<sup>114</sup> Sasson also mentioned that Yehoshua Palmon, the prime minister's advisor on Arab affairs, supported this idea.<sup>115</sup> In addition to Sasson and the idea of immigrating to Libya, Yosef Weitz, Ezra Danin, and others had supported similar ideas for the migration of Arabs to a country in South America, Canada, or Australia.

Most of these ideas remained ink on paper, and few Arabs left the country. In a report by an intelligence agency in September 1951, reference was made to the number of Arabs who had left over the two previous years. Until July 1951 about 2,000 individuals had left the country voluntarily, most to neighboring Arab countries. The unnamed authors of the report said that the number of migrants would have been greater had the state allowed the sale of the property of emigrants.<sup>116</sup> Meanwhile, Yosef Weitz tried to encourage a plan for the inhabitants of Jish to move to Argentina, chosen because some relatives of Jish villagers had already immigrated there. This plan had a code name, Operation Yohanan, after Yohanan bin Levi from the village of Jish on the border with Lebanon. Weitz won the approval and blessings of the prime minister and the foreign minister for his plan. However, the plan failed, as most Jish residents continued to live on their lands and in their country.<sup>117</sup>

The communists took on the migration proposals and their supporters, whom they dubbed "The Expulsion Party."<sup>118</sup> This firm position by the communists made things difficult for some Arab supporters of the plans and caused them embarrassment. When Shaykh Tahir al-Tabari (1895–1959), the shari'a judge of Nazareth, plucked up the courage to send a letter to the prime minister supporting the migration of Arabs from the country, he was attacked even by his friends and allies in *al-Rabita* magazine.<sup>119</sup> In the letter to the head of state, al-Tabari had asked for compensation for the emigrants' property in order to facilitate their journey. This proposal and similar ideas by the judge about population exchanges brought strongly-worded objections, the communists foremost among his critics, but not the only ones. Some of his friends tried to explain that what he had said was a result of the repression of, and discrimination against, Arabs, but nearly everyone expressed objections towards his position, including Muhammad Nimr al-Hawwari, who published a withering critique in *al-Rabita* magazine.<sup>120</sup>

Five years after the Nakba and the creation of Israel, the remainders were even more determined in the face of attempts to make them leave their country. In addition to opposition in principle to the idea of emigration, led by the communists and nationalists, news spread of the difficult living conditions of Palestinians in the Arab countries, as well as the difficulties facing those who decide to leave the country. One rumor said that Arab countries would not issue passports or grant citizenship to those who sold their property and emigrated. Such information, true or not, caused concern among Israeli authorities who were trying to encourage emigration. *Al-Yawm* newspaper concluded, in an article titled “Various Rumors,” that the opposite was true, saying it was well known that “many Arabs who sold their property in Israel and moved to Arab countries obtained Arab citizenship and enjoy equal rights with the rest of the citizens.”<sup>121</sup>

### CONCLUSION

At the end of 1948, estimates by the Israeli army indicated that 3,000 to 4,000 Palestinian refugees had succeeded in returning to the country to live once again in their towns and villages or in neighboring villages.<sup>122</sup> These estimates were not based on accurate data, which was difficult to obtain under the unstable circumstances, prior to the conclusion of the census in the villages of upper Galilee. Consequently, the foreign ministry and the military government put pressure on the interior ministry to conclude that task so that the security forces could identify the “infiltrators” and expel them. Ben-Gurion agreed. He wrote in his diary: “We should not expel any Arab if there is any doubt whether he is an infiltrator or an original resident. If it becomes clear that he is an infiltrator, then he should be expelled.”<sup>123</sup> Indeed, since January 1949, the policy of expulsion intensified.

Not having conducted a census in upper Galilee enabled some returnees to claim they had not left the country. On 17 January, General Avnir sent a report to Ben-Gurion informing him that the census had been completed. Depending on that report, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary (7 February 1949) that there were 102,000 Arabs living under Israeli rule, including 14,000 Druze.<sup>124</sup> The number of Druze was accurate and did not change much that year or in subsequent years. The numbers of Muslims and Christians were incomplete. The given number (102,000) did not include the Bedouins in al-Naqab (the Negev), who were estimated at 19,000,<sup>125</sup> nor did it include the inhabitants of south Majdal (Asqalan). There were various estimates of the inhabitants of that town, ranging between 1,400 and 4,000. The real number may be closer to the estimate of the military government in al-Majdal, which was 2,600.<sup>126</sup> As is well known, these Palestinians were unable to continue living in their town after their expulsion in October 1950.

There is also the question of the thousands of prisoners of war who were in Israeli POW camps until early 1949. Of the 9,000 prisoners of war, Ben-Gurion said there were “about 5,000 local Arabs” who were arrested because they were

close to the age of conscription.<sup>127</sup> The thousands of prisoners constituted an economic and political burden, so Ben-Gurion decided that the locals should be sent back to their places of residence, if their homes were still standing, and if they were not facing other charges. For all these and other reasons, it is difficult to estimate the real number of the Arab residents of Israel on the eve of the first Knesset elections. However, it is likely that the number 120,000 is more accurate than the 102,000 Ben-Gurion recorded in his diary.

In the expulsion operations Israel carried out against the Arab population from the end of the war to the mid-1950s, at least 10,000 individuals among those who remained were expelled. If we also add the Arabs who were expelled from the Naqab, the number doubles.<sup>128</sup> These numbers shed light on one new and important aspect of the reality of Arab life in the country during the first decade after the Nakba. However, the other aspect, which is no less important, is the success of a similar number of Palestinians in returning to their homes and villages and settling there for good. The stories of entire villages which did not give in to the policy of forced migration, such as 'Ilabun and Majd al-Krum and others among al-Shaghur villages, and along the Lebanese border, are living examples of endurance. These stories of return are transmitted to grandchildren from their parents and grandparents. They are known only locally. One result of the success of those who returned, despite the Nakba which paralyzed so many, is that they were able to achieve a new and permanent life for their families on their land and in their homeland.

Five years after the Galilee was completely occupied, official Israeli sources estimated that about 20,500 "infiltrators" had succeeded in gaining citizenship and thus the guarantee that they would spend their lives in the country.<sup>129</sup> In the same period, Israel agreed to a family reunification program for about 3,000 people. These numbers confirm that most returnees succeeded in returning through their own capabilities, despite all the dangers and Israeli policies to stem that phenomenon. The returning "infiltrators" constituted about a quarter of the population of the Galilee after the Nakba. However, if we remember that Israel expelled a similar number of Arabs from the end of the war until 1956, it is difficult to accept the conclusion that the number of those who remained in the country increased during that period by 15 percent due to so-called illegal return.<sup>130</sup>

The phenomenon of the "present absentees" remains one of the suspended painful issues after the Nakba. "Security" issues were not behind the prevention of a quick solution for this problem in the 1950s; rather this policy was driven by Israel's desire to gain control over the largest possible share of Palestinian lands, including the lands of those who remained and who had become Israel's permanent citizens. Israel planned and worked to expel the largest possible number of those who remained in the country after the guns fell silent, but the fear of international, regional, and local repercussions prevented the full realization of those blueprints. These factors compelled Israel to accept the return of all the inhabitants

of 'Ilabun from Lebanon to their homes after they had been expelled. The government was also compelled to accept the return of the inhabitants of 'Illut from Nazareth to their homes. So the inhabitants of Iqrit and Kufr Bir'im ask to this day: why do we have to accept the continued theft of our lands by the government, and to live as refugees in Jish near the Lebanese border? Those who were expelled to Nazareth from Saffuriyya and other villages also ask: why do we have to accept our banishment from their village, while the inhabitants of nearby 'Illut have been allowed to return to theirs?