



Induction Pack

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Our Goals

Free Palestine Melbourne is a community organisation dedicated to raising public awareness of the Palestinians' hundred-year struggle for freedom.

Our goals are:

1. To act in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their calls for peace and justice in Palestine, and right to self-determination and freedom;
2. To work for justice and equality for all Palestinians in accordance with principles of international law and human rights, including the right of return;
3. To promote Palestinian voices, and foster increased awareness of the Palestinian struggle

Free Palestine Melbourne meets monthly. We welcome the participation of anyone who supports a just peace in Palestine based on universal human rights and international law. Please [contact us](#) if you wish to get involved.

Free Palestine Melbourne acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, live and organise – the Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung and Wathaurong people – and their Elders past, present and emerging, of the Kulin nation. Like in Palestine, sovereignty was never ceded and the struggle against settler-colonialism continues.



What is the *Nakba*?

Every year on May 15, Palestinians around the world mark the *Nakba*, or “catastrophe”, referring to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.

Zionist military forces expelled at least 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and lands and captured 78 percent of historic Palestine. The remaining 22 percent was divided into what are now the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip.

Plan Dalet

This was a specific Zionist [plan](#) to drive out Palestinians from historic Palestine in 1948. It came with detailed descriptions of the methods to be used to forcibly evict the people: large-scale intimidation; laying siege to and bombarding villages and population centres; setting fire to homes, properties, and goods; expelling residents; demolishing homes; and, finally, planting mines in the rubble to prevent the expelled inhabitants from returning.

Each [Haganah](#) unit was issued its own list of villages and neighborhoods to target, in keeping with the master plan.

Once the plan was finalised, it took six months to complete the mission. When it was over, more than half of Palestine’s native population, over 750,000 people, had been uprooted, 531 villages had been destroyed, and 11 urban neighborhoods had been emptied of their inhabitants.

Nakba Massacres

Deir Yassin

On April 9, 1948, [Deir Yassin](#) village was occupied by the Irgun and Stern Gang (Lechi) Jewish forces. At least 93 Palestinian villagers were killed in cold blood, their bodies abused, while a number of the women were raped and then killed. Of those killed, thirty were babies.



*Jewish paramilitaries in Deir Yassin.
[Image 1 source notes below]*



*Photograph of Tantura during the British Mandate.
[Image 2 source notes below]*

Tantura

On May 22, 1948, Jewish soldiers from the Alexandroni Brigade occupied [Tantura](#) and shot 110-230 Palestinian men. As the Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé documents: “The Jews gathered all the women and children, in a place where they dumped all bodies, for them to see their dead husbands, fathers and brothers and terrorise them.”

Dawaymeh

On October 28, 1948, in the village of [Dawaymeh](#), near Hebron, about 145 children, women and men were killed. Over 450 went missing, of which 170 were women and children.

Safsaf

On October 29, 1948, Israeli forces assaulted [Safsaf](#) village as part of Operation Hiram. After the villagers surrendered, some 50-70 men were massacred while bound and four women reported being raped. The IDF records for this massacre remain classified.

Palestinian Refugees

There are some six million registered [Palestinian refugees](#) living in at least 58 camps located throughout Palestine and neighbouring countries.

There are at least 2.3 million Palestinian refugees in Jordan, 1.5 million refugees in Gaza, 870,000 refugees in the occupied West Bank, 570,000 refugees in Syria and 480,000 refugees in Lebanon.

The largest camps in each are Baqa'a in Jordan, Jabalia in Gaza, Jenin in the West Bank, Yarmouk in Syria, and in El Hilweh in Lebanon.

More than 70 percent of Gaza's residents are refugees. About 1.5 million refugees live in eight refugee camps around the Gaza Strip.

According to international law, refugees have the right to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced. Many Palestinians still have hope of returning to Palestine.

The plight of Palestinian refugees is the longest unresolved refugee problem in the world.

Palestinians' life under occupation

Israel's military [control](#) over the Palestinian people affects every aspect of their lives, from what services they can access and where they can travel to whom they can marry and where they can live.

The Ongoing Nakba

Every year, Israel demolishes hundreds of Palestinian homes to make way for new Israeli dwellings. According to data compiled by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), between 2009 and 2022, at least 8,413 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished by Israeli forces, displacing at least 12,491 people.



Palestinians being expelled from Haifa, April 1948. [Image 3 source notes below]

Illegal Settlements

Over 750,000 Israeli settlers live in the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem. [Israeli settlements](#) are illegal under international law. As of January 2023, there are 144 illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including 12 in occupied East Jerusalem. In addition to the settlements, the West Bank is also hosting over 100 Israeli outposts, which are settlements that have not been authorised by the Israeli government.



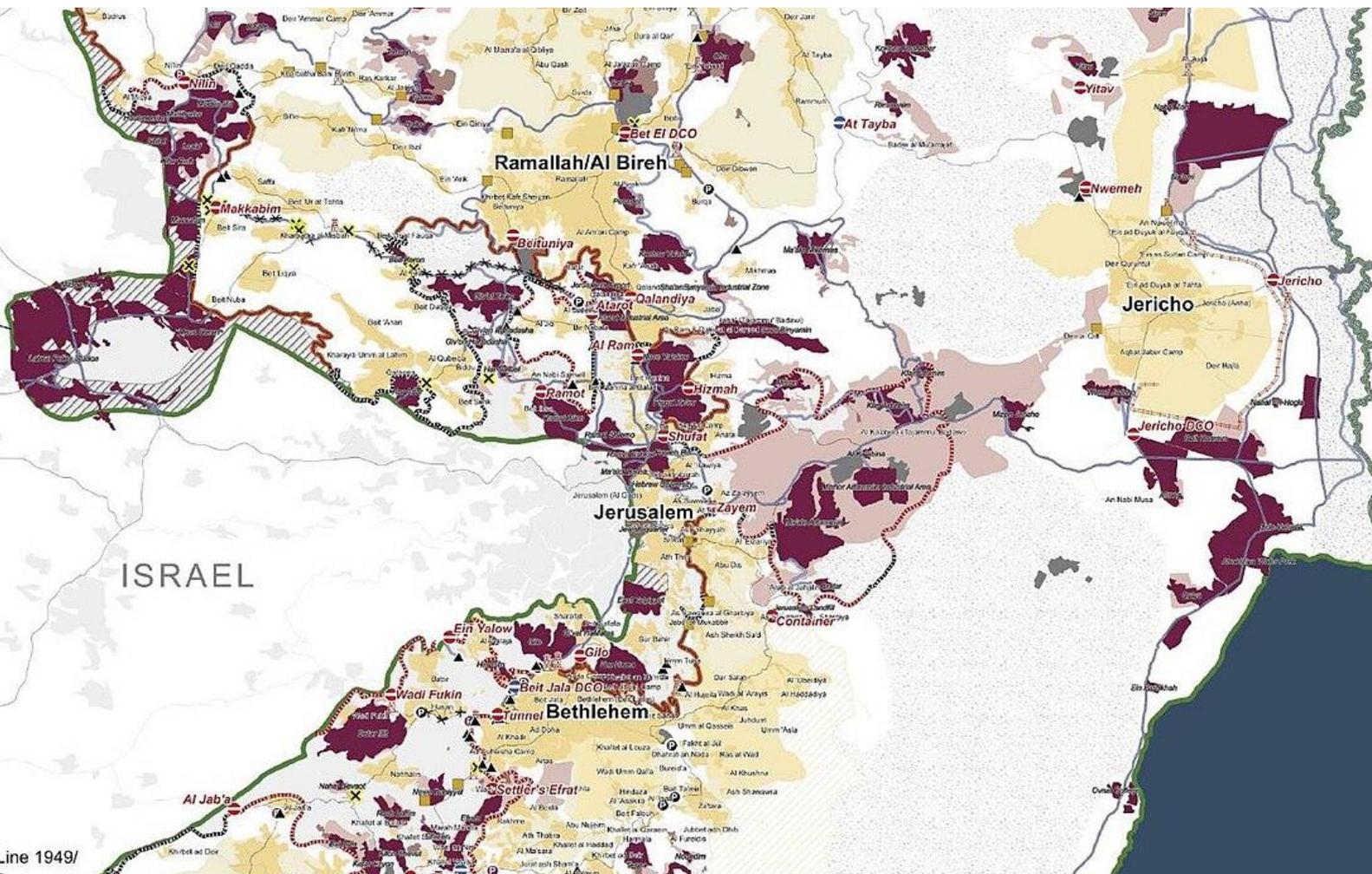
Images:

Image 1: *By Unknown author - Haaretz article: Testimonies From the Censored Deir Yassin Massacre: 'They Piled Bodies and Burned Them' [1], Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=146750504>*

Image 2: *By Matson collection - File:Northern_views._Tantoura._Ancient_Dor._The_village_from_the_sea_LOC_matpc.15365.jpg, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=152097361>*

Image 3: *By Fred Chesnik - Haaretz, Was Israeli Looting in '48 Part of a Broader Policy to Expel Arabs?, Benny Morris, 3 June 2021, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=154163119>*

Map source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).



Why we stand with Palestine

Standing with Palestine is often misinterpreted, and criticism of Israeli government practices becomes unjustly conflated with antisemitism. Does that mean that we cannot speak out for justice and freedom in Palestine? No, it most certainly does not. Support for Palestine is support for human rights, freedom from occupation and self-determination.

Palestinians and their supporters are vocal in opposition to Zionism, not to Judaism or to Jews. This distinction is always clearly articulated. Both Jews and Palestinians are semitic people and both deserve equal human rights. For hundreds of years before the creation of modern Israel, Palestine was home to Christians, Muslims and Jews, generally living in harmony and with mutual respect.

Too often Palestinians are labelled terrorists or animals and currently many seem to see them as expendable, simply collateral damage in a war to destroy Hamas. Surely if Palestine was given justice and self-determination, there would be no need for Hamas or anyone else to attack Israel.

Why do governments intent on the doctrine that “Israel has the right to defend itself” not see the tens of thousands of Palestinians dead in the occupied Gaza Strip, the wounded and crying children, the parents desperate to feed their families, or the elderly and sick unable to walk, trying to reach safety? Or are they seen and discounted, their human rights discarded, their dreams trashed, considered not important enough to protest about?

Meanwhile, in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian homes are demolished to make way for new, illegal Israeli settlements, the Separation Wall steals more land, and the takeover of occupied East Jerusalem. Since October 7, 2023, hundreds of Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli army, hundreds more have suffered attacks on their homes and farms from violent illegal Israeli settlers and, over 7,000 Palestinian have been imprisoned, many without trial under “administrative detention”.



The Separation Wall in Jerusalem. [Source: UNCTAD]

When the nation of modern Israel was created in 1948, the resident Palestinians were not even considered worthy of consultation. Their fate was decided for them and so it has continued to today. Where and how they live have been controlled by Israel. Their land has been taken and their children imprisoned. Palestinians are expected to succumb to dispossession and a never-ending military occupation – and the world is surprised when the Palestinians resist. We do not advocate violence but if the international community will not defend the rights of Palestinians, we honestly do not know what the world expects of them.

The history of the Middle East since the early twentieth century is complicated and messy. Simplistically, for the purposes of this piece, at the end of the war the British found themselves in an awkward position, having made a number of expedient and contradictory promises. During the war, the first promise was to the Emir of Mecca, Hussein ibn Ali, promising Arab independence if he led troops against the Ottoman Empire. In 1916 the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement divided areas of the Middle East between Britain and France and in 1917, the Balfour Declaration committed the British government to support the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.

After the war, Palestine was betrayed – it was not given independence but ruled by Britain under the British Mandate. Indigenous Palestinians were catalogued among the “peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world” (Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations).

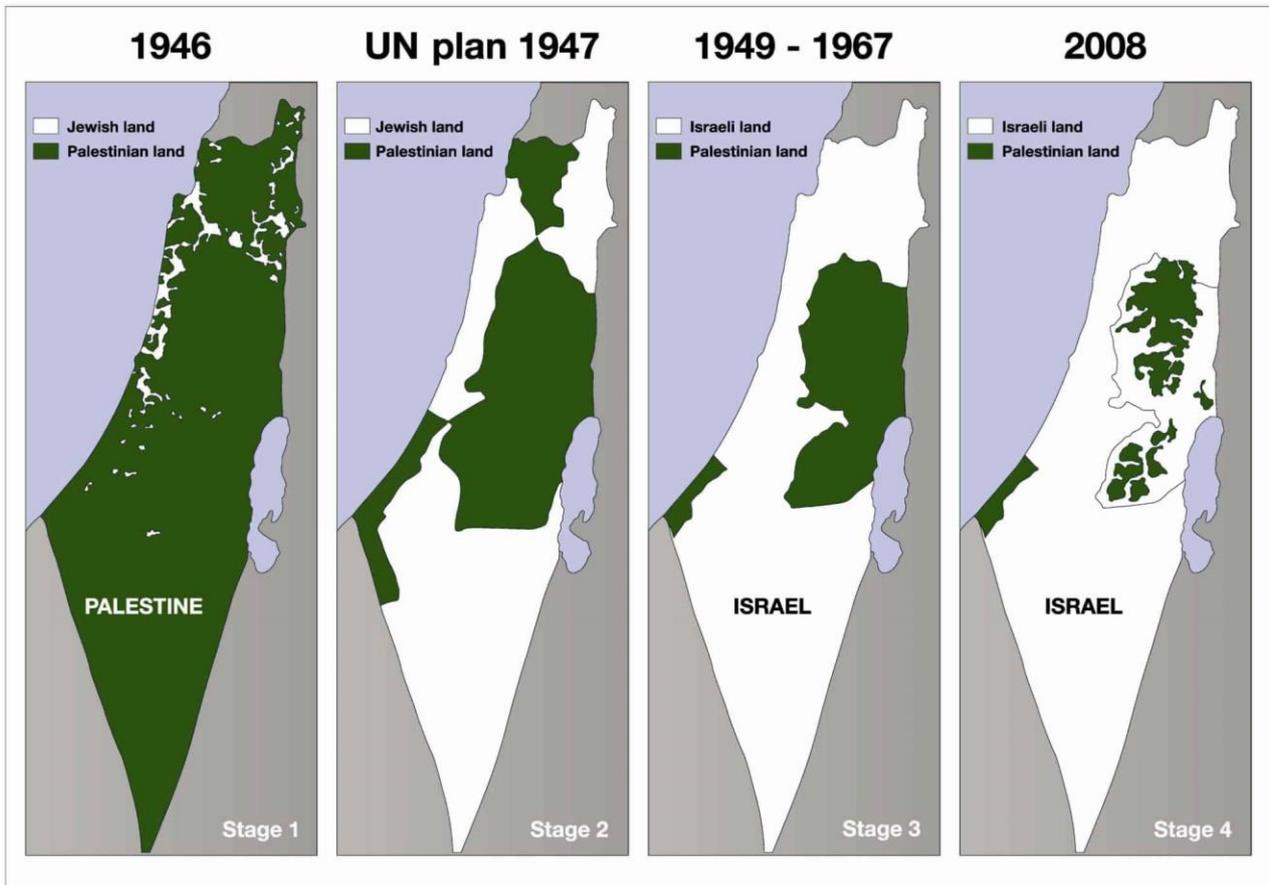
Eventually, and after yet another war, and the horrors of the Nazi holocaust, Palestine was partitioned by resolution 181 of the United Nations General Assembly. Australia was one of the first countries to recognise Israel in 1948 and our government, no matter the party, has been staunchly in support ever since.

The UN resolution stated that Independent Arab and Jewish States would come into existence in Palestine two months after the evacuation of British Mandate troops, but in any case, not later than 1 October 1948. Even the Balfour Declaration said that Britain had an obligation to conduct its policy in Palestine in accordance with the needs of both Jews and Arabs. Why then has this not happened? Why are Gazans being massacred, why do Israeli troops still occupy the West Bank and why are Palestinians still denied self-determination?

We can do no other than to stand with Palestine.



Disappearing Palestine map



[Image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/palestinesolidaritycampaign/16035181719/>]

Code of Conduct

Preamble

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to enable Free Palestine Melbourne (Victoria) to maintain a harmonious, healthy and collaborative environment. Broadly, in working as part of the group, members are expected to have the groups' interests at heart. This necessarily entails acting in a way which enables the group to carry out its core function and purpose of working towards justice for Palestine, without hindrance or distraction. This also means displaying attitudes and values that support the vision and mission of FPM, acting in a respectful, supportive and thoughtful manner with other members and the wider public.

The Code of Conduct sets out the basic expectations of ethical and equitable actions and relationships expected of all members. These expectations are based on the principle that individuals not only have rights but also duties and responsibilities to others.

Adhering to this Code of Conduct will not only lead to productive, friendly and respectful relationships within the group, it will set and enhance community perceptions of the group. It is important that neither members nor the group as a whole are put in a compromised position.

The Code of Conduct is not intended to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every aspect of the group's interactions. Instead, it represents a broad framework that will help guide conduct and behaviour in the performance of duties and interactions.

Specifics

Free Palestine members are expected to:

- Treat others with respect, dignity, fairness, and courtesy. The organisation has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of discrimination. Never act in a discriminatory, harassing, or violent way towards others.
- Ensure that others are heard & listen respectfully to others' views
- Make decisions ethically, fairly and without bias, using the best information available.
- Observe all the policies, procedures and practices of FPM, including for decision making and financial transactions. This includes those specified in written documents and any others determined by the membership of the group
- Work proactively to come to a consensus and if that is not possible, be prepared to abide by the majority vote of the group
- Accept that working groups must act within the brief provided by Free Palestine Melbourne/Victoria and report regularly back to FPM/FPV meetings.
- Ensure that all events and activities taken in the group's name reflect the standards and expectations of the organisation.

- Use information technology, including internet and email, in a professional respectful and appropriate manner.
- Take appropriate steps to resolve any conflict that may arise, whether within the group or with the wider public, following the group's grievance process.
- Be respectful of people's privacy and do not discuss confidential issues of FPM with people outside the group
- Take appropriate action to address breaches of the Code of Conduct

Breaches of the Code

Breaches of the code of conduct may lead to disciplinary action, suspension, or cancellation of membership of Free Palestine Melbourne (Victoria).

Grievance Procedure

This grievance policy sets out the processes for Free Palestine Melbourne Members members to follow if they have a grievance about a member or members of FPM.

The aim of the process is to resolve any grievance so that members can maintain satisfactory working relationships with others in the group.

In the first place all members are encouraged to seek a meeting with the person they have a grievance with to see if they can resolve the issue. If this is unsuccessful or they feel unable to do this then they should start the grievance process below.

All members, while being entitled to address a grievance, should act in a way that the grievance between members does not worsen or disrupt the work of the group and is dealt with via the grievance resolution process.

The grievance processes

- Discussions related to grievances should remain confidential between the party with the grievance, (the complainant), the party with whom the complainant has the grievance (the respondent) and the small FPM group tasked with the responsibility of carrying this process forward.
- All people involved in the process will be made aware of the need for confidentiality.
- No person shall be adversely affected by the making a complaint.
- The process should ensure procedural fairness i.e. each party is given the opportunity to provide information about the grievance, both the person bringing the grievance and the respondent.
- The person or group examining the grievance must not be party to the grievance and must act impartially.
- Both the complainant and the respondent have the right to have a support person in attendance in meetings about the grievance.
- FPM may appoint/ask an outside person or organisation to investigate the grievance if they feel this would best ensure impartiality and/or bring about the best possibility of resolution.
- While discussions take place and until the matter is resolved or a decision is made, the work of the members shall continue normally in accordance with the custom and practice existing before the grievance.
- Health and safety matters however may override the continuation of work at the discretion of the person leading the investigation on behalf of FPM with the agreement of the Grievance Group.

Step 1

The complainant approaches the respondent requesting a meeting to discuss their grievance.

Step 2

If step 1 is not successful or the complainant feels unable to undertake step 1 then they may approach a member of the Grievance Group (GG) to notify the GG that they have a grievance they want resolved. The GG will then discuss the matter and appoint one or more of the GG or members of the group to discuss the issue with the complainant and provide advice about how this may be resolved.

If the grievance involves a member of the Grievance Group they will not take part in any of the process except as a respondent.

Step 3

If the problem is not resolved in Step 2 the complainant may request that the issue be investigated and resolved. The Grievance Group will appoint one or more people to investigate the grievance (this could be the same person or people appointed in step 2).

This will at a minimum involve:

- meeting with the complainant to hear the details of the grievance. The member may have a support person present for this meeting
- meeting with the respondent. The respondent may have a support person present for this meeting

The process of investigation may involve meeting with the complainant and or respondent on more than one occasion to ensure that both have had an opportunity to be heard on issues that arise.

The investigators may also speak to other relevant parties who may be able to shed light on and/or help resolve the grievance.

The investigators can then decide on the actions required, if any, that may help resolve the issue. This can include continued discussion with the complainant, and any other relevant parties. It can also ask the Grievance Group that the matter be referred to the Disputes Settlement Centre of Victoria (DSCV). (The DSCV provides free mediation services and training in disputes resolution.)

The investigators can extend the investigation, however timeframes must be set to allow for this. The aim should always be for resolution within 60 days if not before.

Step 4

If the problem is not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties within 60 days, the Grievance Group can decide to make a final determination, extend the period to resolve the grievance or refer the parties to the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria. The decision of the Grievance Group can include expectations about the dispute not impacting the work of the group. This

can include suspension of one or both of the parties if this is felt necessary to enable the work of the group to continue.

The Grievance Group will inform the complainant and the respondent of their decision within 14 days. The decision of the GG will be final. Failure by either party to abide by the decision can result in disciplinary action being taken.

If the grievance has been upheld, the Grievance Group will report the decision to the monthly meeting. If the decision taken by the Grievance group involves a challenge to the membership status of the complainant or respondent then that decision must be ratified by the full group at the next meeting. The Grievance Group will report on the outcome but without divulging any other confidential information. If the grievance is resolved the process should not be reported.

Appeal

The Free Palestine Melbourne Grievance Group will ensure that the complainant and respondent are heard and provided with procedural fairness in the process. If the member feels that they have been unfairly treated or discriminated against they may contact the relevant statutory organisation.

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