

BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

REMEMBERING THE NAKBA

Spring, 2007 marks the 59th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. June 10 is the 40th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by the Israeli government. On these two anniversaries, we wish to remember the impact of these events on the people who lived in this area at the time of the establishment of the Israeli state.

While the creation of the Jewish state was celebrated by many as an end to millennia of Jewish dispossession and insecurity, this period of Palestinian history has come to be known as al-Nakba, 'the catastrophe.' During the 1948 war with the nascent state of Israel it is estimated that around half of the 1.4 million Palestinian Arabs were driven from their homes, or fled to neighboring Arab states. At the end of the fighting, the new state of Israel controlled 77 percent of the territory of Mandatory Palestine, while the West Bank and the Gaza strip fell to Jordan and Egypt respectively.

The memory of the Nakba is a counter memory that challenges the official Israeli version of events. The Nakba is in one sense the story of the Palestinian tragedy -- the destruction of the villages, the expulsions and the killing -- but it is also a fundamental part of the story of Jews who live in Israel, the victors of the 1948 war. The history of the Nakba has been silenced and almost entirely erased from the physical landscape of Israel; the names of the destroyed villages do not appear on any maps, and no signs are posted to designate their existence.



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In a 2003 ceremony in Israel commemorating the loss of lives at Deir Yasin, one of the villages destroyed in 1948, Abdallah Aziz Barakat, 81 years old, told his story. He is originally from Kolonia, near the village, and his mother is from Deir Yasin. He used to visit his grandparents and uncles in Der Yasin regularly. He began his story by describing the good relationships that Arab villagers and their Jewish neighbors enjoyed before 1948. He said that "before those Jews who came from Europe to Palestine, Arabs and Jews often visited each other and exchanged gifts". Then he started to describe the beginning of the fighting, the fire, the cry of the children and the screaming that was heard from every corner. He explained how the Jewish attackers took over the village and humiliated the people of Deir Yasin. They shot everything that moved, he said, women, children, and men. After occupying the village they put wounded people with torn clothes and naked women on trucks and drove them around the city of Jerusalem, so that other people would learn and see what was done in Deir Yasin. Then they were massacred in a nearby quarry. Seventeen of the victims were from Barakat's family and their names appeared on the posted signs.

Source: "Deir Yassin massacre, 55 years on" by Yair Ettinger (Zochrot), <http://www.nakbainhebrew.org/>



Bay Area Women in Black are Jews and allies who stand against militaristic and fundamentalist leadership in all countries, including our own. We wear black as a sign of mourning for all the Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian lives that have been lost as a result of war, militarization and violence. As part of the international movement of Women in Black, we seek to transform women's mourning for the dead into a powerful refusal of the inevitability of war.