

The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited

Benny Morris



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THE BIRTH OF THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROBLEM REVISITED

Benny Morris' *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, was first published in 1988. Its startling revelations about how and why 700,000 Palestinians left their homes and became refugees during the Arab–Israeli war in 1948 undermined the conflicting Zionist and Arab interpretations; the former suggesting that the Palestinians had left voluntarily, and the latter that this was a planned expulsion. The book subsequently became a classic in the field of Middle East history. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* represents a thoroughly revised edition of the earlier work, compiled on the basis of newly opened Israeli military archives and intelligence documentation. While the focus of the book remains the 1948 war and the analysis of the Palestinian exodus, the new material contains more information about what actually happened in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa, and how events there eventually led to the collapse of Palestinian urban society. It also sheds light on the battles, expulsions and atrocities that resulted in the disintegration of the rural communities. The story is a harrowing one. The refugees now number some four million and their existence remains one of the major obstacles to peace in the Middle East.

Benny Morris is Professor of History in the Middle East Studies Department, Ben-Gurion University. He is an outspoken commentator on the Arab–Israeli conflict, and is one of Israel's premier revisionist historians. His publications include *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist–Arab Conflict, 1881–2001* (2001), and *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–56* (1997).

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My biggest debt, of course, is to my family – my wife Leah, and my children, Erel, Yagi and Orian – for holding up under the strain of my years' long commitment to completing the original 'Birth' and the current work.

Map 1 The United Nations Partition Plan, November 1947

(Based on Martin Gilbert, *The Arab–Israeli Conflict, its History in Maps*, new edn, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976)

Map 2 Arab settlements abandoned in 1948–9 and date and main causes of abandonment

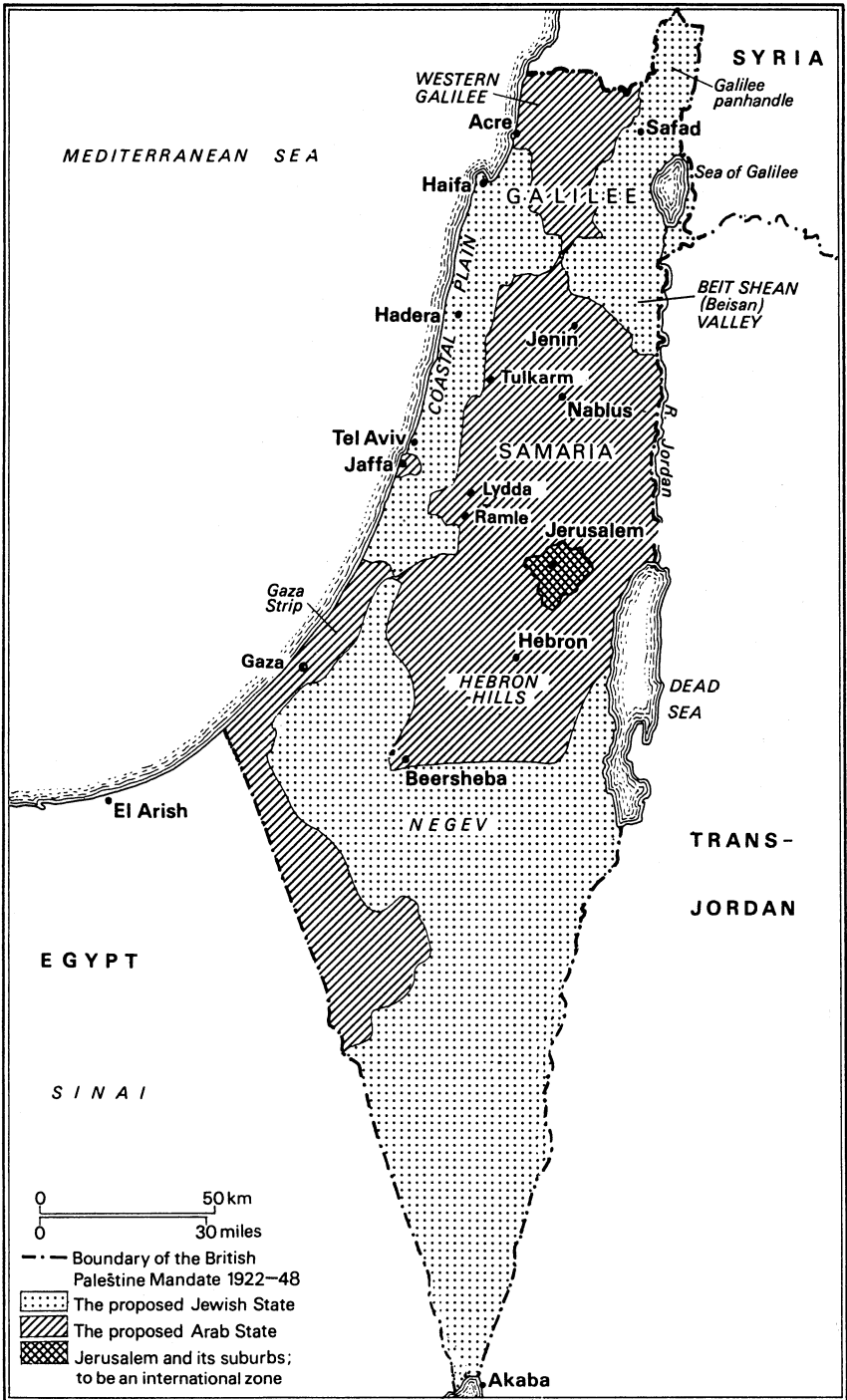
(Note: The map omits a dozen or so very small or satellite villages and small bedouin tribes or sub-tribes)

(Based on *Carta's Historical Atlas of Israel, The First Years 1948–61*, ed. by Jehuda Wallach and Moshe Lissak, Jerusalem, Carta, 1978, p. 139)

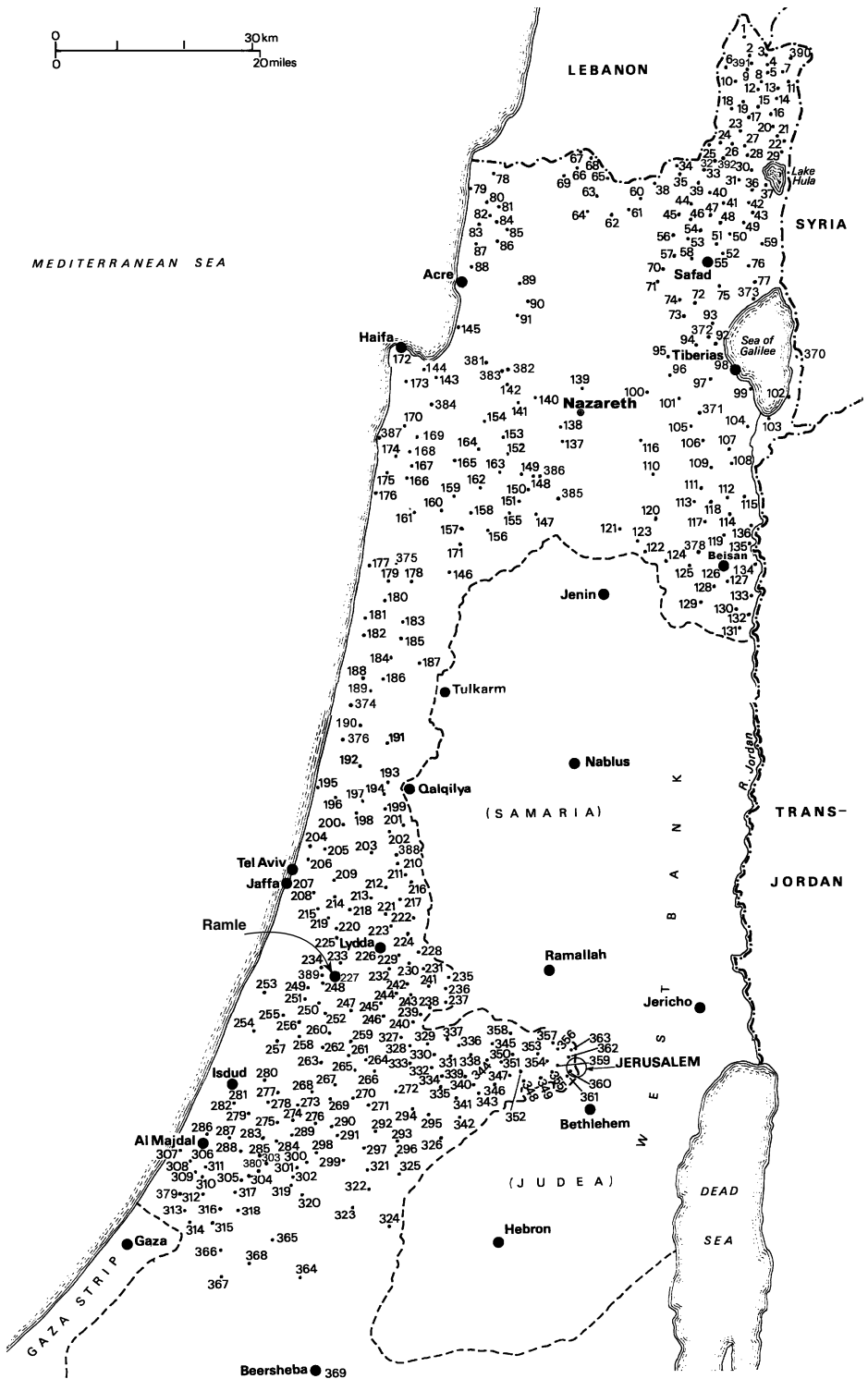
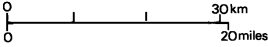
Map 3 Jewish settlements established in 1948–9

(Note: Several of the settlements established in 1948–9 were either dismantled or collapsed. Some changed their names. Others subsequently moved from the original sites to nearby sites)

(Based on The Survey of Palestine 1946 Map with additions by the Survey Department of the State of Israel, made available by the kind permission of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Geography Department and Map Collection)



MAP 1





MEDITERRANEAN SEA

