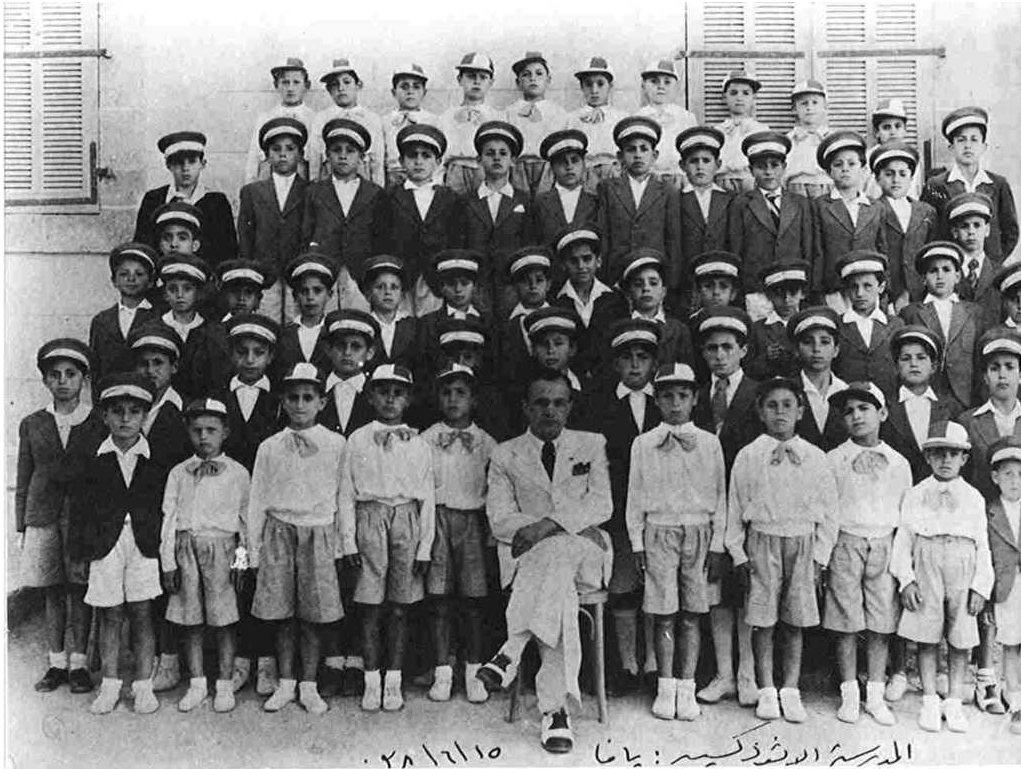


What was Palestine like before the Nakba?

TOWNS



- ❖ To understand the Nakba, we must go back in time and examine Palestinian and Jewish societies as they were during those years. This section will focus on Palestinian society in the towns and villages, and on relations between Jews and Arabs. Palestinian society was primarily agricultural, but beginning in the Ottoman period and during the British Mandate the economic, social, and political center of gravity moved from the villages to the cities, which became an important component of Palestinian society. The large towns were the places that connected local society with innovations, inventions and ideas originating elsewhere, and where the Palestine national movement began.
- ❖ There were twenty-nine towns in 1946. The large, mixed (Arab-Jewish) towns were Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa (e.g., with 70,000 Palestinians and 30,000 Jews). The large Arab towns were Nazareth, Nablus, Hebron, Ramle, Lydda and Gaza. Tel Aviv was the large Jewish town. In 1947, one-third of Palestine's Arabs lived in towns. Commerce, banking, light industries, and transport branches developed in the towns, in addition to a rich cultural and social life. Jaffa, for example, had many cafés, a soccer club, and more movie theaters than in Tel Aviv. It had seven daily newspapers. Although primarily the middle-class bourgeoisie conducted cultural and political activities, the working class and its organizations were also very prominent in the towns.

What was Palestine like before the Nakba?

VILLAGES



- ❖ Two thirds of the Palestinian population was still living in largely rural communities. The main source of income was agriculture. The village was led by the mukhtar, who was usually a representative of its most prominent family. Most villages were independent social, political, and economic units.
- ❖ The villages were usually closed social and political entities, and were economically self-sufficient. Most villages were located on hilltops, and their houses were usually built of stone. Village society was organized around the individual village and the hamula [extended family]. The hamula's power depended on how much property it owned. Land-ownership took various forms: collective, locally owned private land, and feudal holdings by absentee landlords living outside of Palestine. Most villages in 1948 acted autonomously. Some resisted and fought while others chose not to. In some regions, groups of villages formed alliances and shared political views.

What was Palestine like before the Nakba?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND JEWS



- ❖ This slide shows a ceremony inaugurating a Jewish-Arab clinic in Kibbutz Amir, 1945. The sign reads, “Behold, I will bring it healing and cure, and I will cure them, and I will reveal to them a greeting of peace and truth.” (Jeremiah 33:6)
- ❖ The photograph describes the realities of living together. On one hand, they are erecting a Jewish-Arab clinic to serve all the inhabitants of the area; on the other hand, the sign on the clinic is written only in Hebrew, which raises questions about the nature of the cooperation. Were the Arabs partners or only recipients of services from the Jews who constructed the clinic? What was meant by “coexistence”?

What was Palestine like before the Nakba?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND JEWS (continued)



- ❖ Palestinian farmers and their Jewish neighbors in the Hula Valley, 1946.
- ❖ Though neighborly relations and cooperation developed in many places in the country, the growing strength of the two national movements (particularly Zionism) and competition for resources led to tensions, suspicion, and violence.
- ❖ Cooperation was also evident in the establishment of a number of joint political organizations, professional associations, mixed workplaces and commercial ties. Contrarily, Jewish land purchases led to the expropriation of Palestinian tenants and extended the policy of “Jewish labor.” This excluded Palestinians from the developing labor market. Further, many of the Jewish settlers saw themselves as the bearers of a superior European civilization and denigrated local Arab culture.
- ❖ Beginning in the 1920’s, there were some Zionists who opposed the growth of political Zionism and its goal of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. These people believed in cooperation and equality that would be guaranteed by political arrangements, such as a binational state. Among them were Judah L. Magnes, Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem. Also included were the “Brit Shalom” movement, “Agudat lhud,” the Revisionists, the ultra-Orthodox community, and others. Nevertheless, conditions for Jews in Europe were rapidly deteriorating in the 1920’s and 30’s and a Palestinian nationalist movement, resistant to increasing Jewish immigration, was growing.