

Summary and Goals of Session 5:

This session includes close reading and discussion in small groups to give time for participants to reflect on some of the information they have encountered in the previous sessions. Close readings and examinations will be of: the Israeli Declaration of Independence, Plan Dalet, a testimony of a Palmach soldier, and the poems “I Belong There” and “There Was No Farewell.” Participants see what primary texts and documents can and cannot tell us about the Nakba. We place different versions of history in conversation with “official history,” to see where they differ and how we can interpret that conflict.

Total time: 1.5-2 hours

Materials for Session 5:

- Pens/markers
- Paper/chart paper
- Internet connection
- Computer/projector
- Reflection questions on chart paper/computer screen
- Copies of texts in the Round Robin for participants at each station
- Notecards for each station

I. (25 min) Welcome

Materials and set-up:

- Pens/markers
- Paper/chart paper
- Participants’ reflection notebooks

1. (10 min) Review Previous Sessions and Opening Discussion

Facilitator Action: Welcome participants to this session. Guide a group discussion on what we have learned about the Nakba so far. Have someone take notes on the conversation on the group notebook. Additional guiding points:

- *Both Gill and Said challenge the notion that Arab opposition to Zionism both began in 1947-48 and was based on their deep anti-Semitism. They place this opposition in an historical context that goes back to the turn of the 20th century. Said’s *The Question of Palestine* (1979) was a lot of English readers’ first*

exposure to these aspects of the history—the story had rarely been told in English “from the standpoint of its victims.”

- *What did you learn from reading Gill and Said that adds to or challenges the knowledge you already had?*
- *How does it differ from the history you learned? Remind us of the usual sources for history of 1948.*

2. (15 min) Personal Reflections

Facilitator Action: *After reviewing the group reflections on what participants have learned so far, ask participants to reflect in their notebooks on the following questions and choose one response to share with the group:*

- *What information or experience has been new for you? What clicked into place? What still doesn't make sense?*
- *What has it felt like seeing/reading this material?*
- *What does it make you curious about?*

II. (40 minutes) Round Robin

Materials and Set-up:

- Copies of texts in the Round Robin for participants at each station
- Written questions for each station
- Notecards for each station

Facilitator Action: *Four different texts located in four different stations are placed around the room. Divide the group into four small groups. Each group will spend 10 minutes at one station before rotating to the next one, eventually spending 10 minutes at each of the four stations.*

These are the questions that should appear at each station:

STATION 1: [Israeli Declaration of Independence](#)

Facilitator Note: A suggested excerpt from the Israeli Declaration of Independence to use for this station is from “Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful...” to “...and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” If you also wish to include the U.S. Declaration of Independence for reference, it can be found [here](#). The UN Charter can be found [here](#).

- First, what does the Declaration say overall? (Not reading critically yet—just, what’s the main point of it?)
- Second, what pops out at you? What seems significant?
- In these passages, what version of the state is represented? What is missing? *How* is it missing? What contradictions are here?
- How do you compare these excerpts with what you know of the U.S. Declaration of Independence? Do you notice similarities or differences?
- Leave any questions or comments about the texts from this station on the notecard.

STATION 2: [Plan Dalet](#)

Facilitator Note: A suggested excerpt to use for this station is Section 3, “Assignment of Duties,” from page 27-page 31.

- Is there anything surprising about this document? What do you learn from it?
- In your opinion, what was the intended purpose of this document/paragraph?
- We’re reading this in translation—but what do you think about the tone, language, and structure of this document?
- Why do you think this document is so controversial? What do you think the debate around it is about?
- Leave any questions or comments about the texts from this station on the notecard.

STATION 3: [Testimony of a Palmach soldier](#)

Facilitator Note: If not already used in Session 4, an alternate or additional testimony to use for this station can be found [here](#).

- What emotions or feelings arose while reading this testimony?
- In your opinion, how does the speaker feel about the events he is describing?
- How do these former soldiers talk about official history—what’s allowed in, what isn’t, what did they know, what didn’t they?
- Why do you think the speaker agreed to be interviewed about the topic?
- Did you learn anything new from the testimony? If so, what?
- Do you doubt anything said in the testimony? If so, what? why?
- How does this dovetail with Said’s account?
- Leave any questions or comments about the texts from this station on the notecard.

STATION 4: Two poems: [“I Belong There”](#) and [“There Was No Farewell”](#)

Facilitator Note: 1) “I Belong There” by Mahmoud Darwish, translated by Carolyn Forché and Munir Akash. This station could also have some background on Darwish, with attention to the fact that he was a very public and political figure as a poet, in a way that may not be familiar to a U.S. audience. An excellent source of additional background is Fady Joudah's article at the Academy of American Poets website: [Along the Border: On Mahmoud Darwish](#). 2) Taha Muhammad Ali, “There Was No Farewell.” You will need to create a free username to access the full poem on this site.

- Is this evidence? What can we learn from these poems about the historical record? What can we learn *differently* about that record?
- In what way and through what language do these poem seem to be universal? How are they particular? What links does do they make between the universal and the particular? How?
- Why was there no farewell?
- How does this work with what we've discussed about what actually happened in 1948 when Palestinians left, and the myths of the several generous offers from Partition to Taba?
- Leave any questions or comments about the texts from this station on the notecard.

Participant Action: *At each station, the groups read and take time to reflect on the texts, discuss what they see, and write questions and interpretations on note cards. Each rotating group reflects on the text and responds to the questions or thoughts offered by the previous groups. Leave cards at each station.*

III. (25 minutes) Synthesis

Materials and set-up:

- Notecards from stations
- Reflection questions written/displayed with projector or printed

Facilitator Action: *This exercise is a means to discuss the tools of “close reading,” “critical thinking,” multiplicity of narratives, categories of histories, how our responses differ depending on the type of document we are examining, and how these all connect to current policy and everyday life. Facilitators collect the responses from each station and lead a group discussion considering:*

- *What the responses have in common and how they differ.*
- *Possible reasons for these differences.*
- *How do the types of documents differ from one another in the importance we give them?*
- *What are “Official histories” vs. “unofficial histories”? Why/how are they categorized as such?*
- *Where do we look for evidence of the unofficial histories?*
- *How does what we learned in the previous sessions connect with these documents?*
- *How do these documents shape current life and politics?*

IV. (10 minutes) Closing

1. (8 min) Closing reflections

Facilitator Action: *Wrapping up the session, come back to how the documents relate to the Nakba, what happened, and the ways in which it continues to the present. The political solution is impossible without knowing and acknowledging this history. In the next session, we talk about the continuing effects of the Nakba in contemporary Palestinian life, and how this story continues to matter. Guide group discussion:*

- *What is one surprise and one question you’re taking away from today?*
- *Next time we’re discussing Palestinian life since the Nakba, and particularly the experiences of Palestinian refugees. As we enter into the next session, think about this question: What enduring effects on Palestinian communities do you imagine have taken place since the Nakba?*

2. (2 min) Prep for next session

Facilitator Action: *Ask participants to read the following items in preparation for the next session.*

Participant Prep for Session 6

- [*Trump Cannot Simply Erase the Right of Return*](#) by James Zogby, +972 Magazine (Note to Facilitator regarding the sources of the quotes Zogby cites: with the exception of the quote from Ben Gurion, the sources for the quotes used in this article are from Zogby’s book, *The Invisible Victims: Political Zionism and the roots of Palestinian Dispossession*; the Ben Gurion quote can be found in Ilan Pappé’s *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.)

- [Shift to UNHCR criteria would strip refugee status from millions of Palestinians](#) by Adam Rasgon, *Times of Israel*
- [UNWRA Has Changed the Definition of Refugee](#) by Jay Sekulow, *Foreign Policy*

Optional Readings:

- [Letter from President Truman to Prime Minister Ben Gurion](#)
- Map comparing 1947 UN Partition Plan to 1949 Armistice Lines found [here](#) or [here](#)