

## Obstacles to Arab-Israeli peace: Palestinian refugees

By Martin Asser BBC News - 2 September 2010



The refugee camps which sprung up in 1948 became permanent residences in exile

"More than 60 years after the establishment of Israel, there is no Arab-Israeli issue that remains as utterly divisive as the fate of Palestinian refugees. (...)

Palestinian historians, and some Israelis, call 1948 a clear example of ethnic cleansing - perpetrated by the Haganah (later the Israeli Defence Forces) and armed Jewish gangs. Official Israeli history, by contrast, says most Palestinian refugees left to avoid a war instigated by neighbouring Arab states, though it admits a "handful" of expulsions and unauthorised killings. What is undisputed is that the refugees' fate is excluded from most Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts because, given a right of return, their numbers endanger the future of the world's only Jewish state. (...)

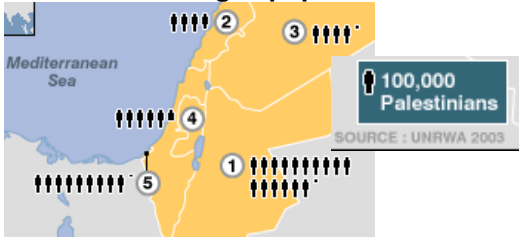
Israel steadfastly argues that all refugees - and it disputes the numbers - should relinquish any aspirations to return to what is now its territory, and instead be absorbed by Arab host countries or by a future Palestinian state. (...)

But that view is at odds with UN General Assembly Resolution 194 and Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Resolution 194 asserts the refugees' unconditional right of return to live at peace in their old homes or to receive compensation for their losses.

**Disputed status** - (...) Palestinians refuse to give up on claims dating back to 1948. (...) Israel has deployed a number of arguments to justify blocking the return of Palestinian refugees,

**Massive displacement** - Four million UN-registered Palestinian refugees trace their origins to the 1948 exodus; 750,000 people belong to families displaced in 1967 - many for the second time.

### Palestinian refugee populations



such as saying that it is the only Jewish state, the refuge of Jews from around the world, while there are 22 Arab countries where they could go. (...)

This is problematic for many ordinary Palestinians, however, because it sidelines the Nakba, the "catastrophe" of 1948 - an issue that for them lies at the heart of the conflict. (...)"

### Questions.

1. Underline or highlight in red the Israeli point of view about refugees. How does Israel officially justify it. Rephrase the article.
2. Underline or highlight in green the Palestinian point of view. How do they justify it? Rephrase the article.
3. What resolution has the UN Assembly adopted? What justifies it? Rephrase the article
4. What major problems do Palestinian refugees face today? What is at stake today?