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Table 2.2 Palestinian List of Refugee Land Sold to the Jewish National Fund in January 1949.

Table 2.1 US State Department Estimate of Israeli Compensation and Costs to Repatriate and Resettle Palestinian Refugees, 1949-1950.
No issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict has proven more intractable than the status of the Palestinian refugees. This work focuses on the controversial question of the property left behind by the refugees during the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Beyond discussing the extent of the refugees’ losses and detailing the methods by which Israel expropriated this property, the book also notes the ways that the property question has affected, and in turn been affected by, the wider Arab-Israeli conflict over the decades. It shows how the property question influenced Arab-Israeli diplomacy and discusses the implications of the fact that the question remains unresolved despite numerous diplomatic efforts.

From late 1947 through 1948, more than 726,000 Palestinians—over half the entire population—were uprooted from their homes and villages. Though some middle-class refugees were able to flee with liquid capital, the majority were small-scale farmers whose worldly fortunes were the land, livestock, and crops they left behind. This book tells for the first time the full story of how much property changed hands, what it was worth, and how it was used by the fledgling state of Israel. It then traces the subsequent decades of diplomatic activity on the issue and publishes previously secret UN estimates of the scope and value of the refugee property. Michael Fischbach offers a detailed study of Israeli counterclaims for Jewish property lost in the Arab world, diplomatic schemes for resolving the conflict, secret compensation efforts, and the renewed diplomatic efforts on behalf of property claims since the onset of Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Based largely on archival records, including those of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), never before available to the public and kept under lock and key in the UN archives, RECORDS OF DISPOSSESSION is the first detailed historical examination of the Palestinian refugee property question.

MICHAEL R. FISCHBACH is professor of history at Randolph-Macon College. He specializes in land issues relating to Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians and is the author of State, Society, and Land in Jordan.

"Michael Fischbach's RECORDS OF DISPOSSESSION is a path-breaking book. He presents an extraordinarily meticulous review of enormous amounts of previously unavailable data on property losses by Palestinian Arabs (and by Jews). The volume will finally make possible serious discussion over ways to alleviate the personal and political consequences of fifty-five years of what can only be described as continuing theft. This volume will surely take its place alongside other great books about Arab-Israeli relations - books by Benny Morris, Gershon Shafir, Baruch Kimmerling, Yael Zerubavel, Beshara Doumani, and others whose work has replaced ignorance with information and propaganda with analysis." - IAN S. LUSTICK, author of Unsettled States, Disputed Lands

"Michael Fischbach's RECORDS OF DISPOSSESSION will be an invaluable resource for those in charge of conducting the predictable tutorial after any settlement of the underlying conflict. . . Fischbach's book will be a helpful resource in the implementation of any settlement of the conflict." - ARTHUR C. HELTON, Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

"Michael Fischbach has produced one of the most thorough and authoritative studies of Palestinian refugee property archives to appear in many years. His critical examination of the UNCCP records will make this book a standard reference for both the specialized scholar and policy makers addressing the future of refugees in the Arab-Israeli conflict." - SALIM TAMARI, professor of sociology at Birzeit University, Palestine, and director of the Institute of Jerusalem Studies in Jerusalem

"This thorough and balanced study will serve as the definitive and indispensable treatment of the important issue of compensation of the Palestinians who became refugees in 1948." - RASHID KHALIDI, Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies and director of the Middle East Institute, Columbia University
Amazon Reviews

[Fischbach] presents the most detailed and extensive discussion of the issues related to Palestinian refugee property available to the public to date... The volume is an important guide to primary data and is itself a source of previously unpublished information concerning Palestinian refugee property and the compensation issue. -- Don Peretz Middle East Journal The book will undoubtedly figure in discussions of the Palestinians' 'right of return.' Publishers Weekly definitive work...this is an excellent book which contributes new data and insight into the land question in the early years of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict -- Sally Bland The Jordan Times This meticulously written book is the first of its kind to present a comprehensive description of the Palestinian refugee property issue. It is highly recommended... This book will no doubt form a basis for further research. -- Daphne Tsimhoni, Hebrew University of Jerusalem Digest of Middle East Studies Spring 2005 Fischbach's work is a thorough academic research based on ample Israeli, Arab, U.N., and other primary sources. -- Arnon Golan Shofar Fall 2004 Fischbach, a professor of history at Randolph-Macon College in Virginia, has stepped into this minefield with an important book. The Canadian Jewish News 8/25/05 This book is valuable and important in covering ground not investigated... and in offering readers access to materials largely unstudied. -- Ylana N. Miller American Historical Review 10/1/05 An important piece of revisionist history. International Journal of Middle East Studies Vol 38, 2006

Indispensable Road Map

If the Bush Administration is seeking a real road map to peace, this should be its basis. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is and has always been about land. Dr. Fischbach has done the world a favor by providing us the detail we need about what land was taken, and how sane and factual negotiations about its particulars provide us with a pathway out of the death and destruction of the past 50 years. Please read this book and hope our leaders do as well.

Crucial book

This book studies the expropriation of the property of the Palestine refugees and the compensation issues and diplomatic activity that followed. Especially interesting (to me) is the discussion of the estimates of the dollar value of these losses. It is based primarily on the records of the UN Conciliation Commission on Palestine. It should be of the highest interest to anyone with an interest in the Israel Palestine problem and how it might be resolved. I must confess that I have only started reading this book and I am not a scholar- I am a lawyer- but I highly reccomend this book.

Superb analysis of a crucial issue in the Palestine conflict

This book came about as a result of a project to commit the records of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestinians to CD format. Author Michael Fishbach was then given access to the records and has proceeded to navigate the vagaries of the issue of Palestinian refugee property--a sometimes obscure but always central issue of the Arab dispute with Israel. Carefully researched, meticulously documented, and well written, this book should be the foundation for many future studies of the issue.

The author remains coolly analytical and non-partisan in his approach, and this should be one of the abiding strengths of the book. Most treatments of the Arab-Israeli conflict are accused by one side or the other as being so completely biased as to be completely unreliable. Of course, some of them are, but the opposing camps of the issue tend to view any attempt at balance as favouring the other side. Fishbach's book is nothing if not balanced, and it would be very difficult to level the charge of bias against him (although I am sure it will be attempted). His is purely and simply a sober recitation of the facts of the case, as complicated as they are. This is to my reading a far more effective technique of assigning credit and laying blame than any polemic, regardless of how elegant the rhetoric.

What emerges from the conflicting figures (all provided in tables and summarized in the appendix) and diplomatic fencing (summarized neatly and matter-of-factly as the narrative unfolds) attendant upon the issue throughout its fifty-five year history is a record of another sort: that of Israeli duplicity and obstructionism. Granted, both sides have kicked these properties around as a political football until Hell won't have them. And the author reveals all of the manoeuvering on either side. Nevertheless, it is the manipulative nature of the Israeli approach that stands out.

In the hands of a less skillful writer, this could turn into a slog through a trackless swamp, pursued only through a sense of duty. Fortunately, Fischbach is as adept at historiography as he is at compiling his evidence, and the book reads effortlessly despite its being long and dense with facts and figures.

This truth will help set all of us free

Profound mind-opening evidence, that proves the truth about the evil deceit that has sought to justify a horrible crime against many thousands of innocent men, women and children, who were and are truly heirs to the blessing that God promised to the descendants of Abram. Profound, profound!