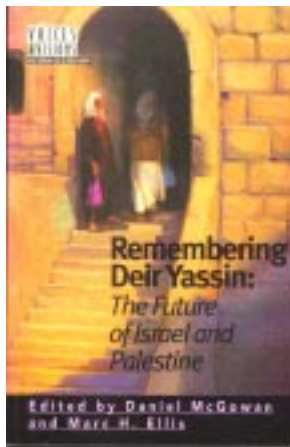


Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine

Edited by Daniel McGowan and Marc H. Ellis

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Reviewed by Sawsan Abdulrahim



Author **Daniel McGowan**, founder of the **Deir Yassin Remembered Project**, will visit Ann Arbor to educate and reflect on the Deir Yassin massacre and the future of the two states of Israel and Palestine. **April 8, 1999, 7 pm, University of Michigan Angell Hall, Auditorium B.** Talk followed by film *Children of Shatila*, and a candlelight vigil.

On the morning of April 9, 1948, more than 200 Palestinian residents of Deir Yassin, a peaceful village on the Western outskirts of Jerusalem, were massacred. The atrocity was accomplished by a group of Jewish fighters led by Irgun (Menachem Begin's terrorist organization) and the Stern Gang (Yitzhak Shamir's terrorist organization). The word "Deir Yassin" was wiped off the map. Irgun leadership issued the command, "As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere."

Within less than a year of this terrorist act, the village was repopulated with Jews from Poland, Slovakia and Romania. For Palestinians, Deir Yassin signaled the beginning of the end. To this day the massacre is considered a symbol for the destruction of Palestine. The cries of the massacred children, women and old men resonated throughout the land and instilled terror into the hearts and minds of

hundreds of thousands of villagers. In the aftermath of Deir Yassin, more than 400 Palestinian villages were depopulated or destroyed, and 750,000 Palestinians became destined to lives of refugee-hood and exile.

What happened at Deir Yassin was nothing short of an ethnic cleansing operation; a depopulation of one group of people in order to make room for another group deemed to be superior. The first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, referred to the process as "a miraculous cleansing of the land".

For Palestinians, the memory of Deir Yassin is vivid and can never be denied. Many Israelis and Jews, however, don't know of Deir Yassin; as it has been wiped off the face of the map, so it has been wiped off the face of Jewish consciousness. The site of Deir Yassin on the Western outskirts of Jerusalem is now an Israeli mental hospital. Ironically, the

museum where Jewish victims of the Holocaust are memorialized lies within sight of Deir Yassin, where tombs of Palestinian victims remain, to this day, unknown and unmarked. Deir Yassin is a prototype of the story of Palestine, for the creation of Israel was dependent on the cleansing of hundreds of thousand of Palestinians from their homes and villages to accommodate Jews from all over the world.

Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine, is a reflection on the legacy of the Deir Yassin massacre. The book is co-edited by Daniel McGowan, professor of economics at HWS College in Geneva, NY, and founder of the Deir Yassin Remembered Project, and Mark H. Ellis, a Jewish theolo-

gian and scholar. It is a collection of writings by Palestinians, Israelis, Jews, Muslims and Christians, all of whom call for peace, solidarity and justice. The book is part of a larger effort to educate, raise consciousness, and fundraise for the Deir Yassin Remembered Project. The hope is that efforts will culminate in creating a monument for the innocent victims whose bodies fell in this senseless terrorist act, and for those survivors whose lives have been shattered.

In the memorial and the book, the editors and contributors propose a universal narrative of remembrance and solidarity, that has the potential to heal wounds of past aggressions, and overcome denial and silence. The writings compiled in

this work arrive from authors with a variety of past experiences, and different approaches for the future. However, all attempt to challenge the silence and denial, and assert that "reconstructing the memory" of Deir Yassin is a responsibility and task for Palestinians and Jews alike. Mark Ellis reflects on whether the inability to confess the aggressions committed against the innocent in Deir Yassin "further wounded the Jewish people and made it more difficult for them to heal". Just as the creation of Israel was made possible by the blood and cries of the victims of the Jewish Holocaust, 51 years later, the future of Palestine will also be shaped by the blood and tears of the victims of the Holocaust that began at Deir Yassin.