

“The silence of the Israeli media's occupation lambs”

Both print and electronic outlets are supporting the project of crowding Palestinians into Bantustans so that most of the West Bank will be annexed and the Jews will benefit from cheap real estate

Amira Hass | Feb. 8, 2021 | 11:15 AM , <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-the-silence-of-the-israeli-media-s-occupation-lambs-1.9520783>

Which New York newspapers reported the fact that on May 26, 1838, about 7,000 U.S. soldiers started to expel thousands of members of the Cherokee Nation from their homeland, as per the Native American Removal Act signed by President Andrew Jackson? What did the newspapers in Johannesburg report on February 10, 1955, a day after some 2,000 armed police officers expelled Black families from their homes in the Sophiatown neighborhood? How many were satisfied with a reminder that the act of expulsion was carried out as mandated in the Group Areas Act?

We'll leave that investigation to others, and pose a different question: How many and which Hebrew-language Israeli media outlets reported last week that the Civil Administration demanded that members of the [Khirbet Humsa community](#) in the northern Jordan Valley “voluntarily” uproot themselves from the area where they have been living for decades – and then demolished and confiscated their shacks, pens and belongings? The answer is easy: the online newsmagazine Siha Mekomit (Hebrew “sister” of the English 972 site) and Haaretz.

Israel's print and electronic media excels at reporting on internal Palestinian scandals, on armed Palestinians before and after their arrest, and on [breaches in the separation barrier](#) that enable people to seek a livelihood on the other side. But this time it remained silent. Just as it usually remains silent in the face of the cruel bans on construction and development that Israel imposes on the Palestinians, and in the face of the [frequent demolitions and confiscation operations](#) it launches against them.

As opposed to the past, today there is WhatsApp and the internet and drones, which help to report on goings-on in real time. Israeli journalists are not in danger of persecution and arrest as their colleagues are in Russia and China, or as was the case in racist South Africa. But the Hebrew-language media remains silent because it willingly accepts the official lie, that operations such as that in Khirbet Humsa are [legitimate enforcement activities](#). By its silence it is normalizing the slow and ongoing expulsion that the Israel Defense Forces, the Civil Administration, the Jerusalem Municipality and the Interior Ministry are carrying out against the Palestinians.

In these cases, the media serves the basic master plan of Israel's governments: crowding the Palestinians into Bantustans, so that most of the [West Bank](#) will be annexed to Israel and so that the Jews will benefit from the cheap real estate there. This silence moves between cowardice and deliberate collaboration with the crimes and the material gain that they yield.

The firing exercise held by the IDF last week on land belonging to the villages of Jinba, Mirkez, Bir Al-Eid and Tawamin are part of the master plan for “open space,” as the South Hebron Hills Regional Settlements Council said – its intention being “Arab-free space.” Here too Israeli journalists kept quiet.

It's true that there are major differences between the expulsion here and the other expulsions mentioned above. The criminal acts in the United States were perpetrated before international conventions

determined what is self-evident today: that expulsion, colonization and apartheid are crimes. The African National Congress and the International Solidarity Movement didn't allow the crimes of Pretoria to be removed from the agenda.

As opposed to Jackson and the Afrikaner prime ministers – Daniel Malan, Hans Strijdom and Hendrik Verwoerd – the Israeli governments of Benjamin Netanyahu and his predecessors, including Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, have been carrying out the expulsion of Palestinians bit by bit since 1967 (as opposed to the mass expulsions of 1948-1952). Haaretz and even Siha Mekomit don't report every demolition of a Palestinian home either.

The Israeli expulsion today is not bloody like the campaigns to uproot native peoples in the United States in the 19th century, or overt like what happened in Johannesburg – but it is effective. The number of Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley communities and in the [villages of Masafer Yatta](#) (a cluster of Palestinian villages in the southeastern West Bank) remains small, compared to the rate of natural population growth and the agricultural potential of their land. Not many people can constantly live in the specter of demolition orders or tolerate the ongoing Israeli hunt for every sheep pen that is built, and every water faucet and solar panel installed.

We will shout out once again: The creeping transfer to the Bantustans was and is made possible by declaring sprawling military live-fire zones, confiscation of possessions, building of settlements on the land of Palestinians who were abroad in 1967, bans on Palestinian construction and frequent demolitions of their homes, and the growing violence of residents of ostensibly illegal Jewish outposts, which receive official and semi-official funding in order to take root, expand and expel. And are enabled by the Israeli public, whose reactions range from indifference to enthusiastic acceptance. No means is created in isolation. Every means is related to another one, and those involved are overt and covert partners to an ongoing crime of forced uprooting.

Let us once again remind you: Major expulsions, by means of trucks and bayonets and the like, were carried out in 1985, in the mid-1990s and in 1999 against more than a dozen villages and communities. The resilience of Bedouin communities and Palestinian villages, along with the involvement of human rights organizations, Israeli lawyers and left-wing activists, have sabotaged the plan to uproot them entirely and people returned to the lands where they had been living for generations – although the families of Susya are not allowed to return to the original site of their village.

[Justices on the High Court](#) – and I have written about this repeatedly as well – are supposed to decide this year between meting out justice or acceding to the demand by the Jewish real-estate lobby that thousands of Palestinians in Masafer Yatta be crowded into Yatta. In other words, to determine whether the Palestinians have a right to remain on their land, develop their villages and be connected to infrastructure, or be forced to abandon their way of life and their livelihood.

This repeated writing is a call to countries that are still committed to international law: Don't wait for the International Criminal Court in the The Hague. Use your power to prevent the crowding of the Palestinians into Bantustans – even if Jewish judges may approve it.