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1948

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michael barbaro

From “The New York Times,” I’m Michael Barbaro. This is “The Daily.”

As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict enters its darkest chapter in decades, both sides are evoking the same foundational moment in their past, the events of 1948.

Today, I speak with David Shipler, the author of a book about the conflict and a Jerusalem Bureau Chief for “The Times” at a crucial moment in our understanding of 1948 about the meaning and the reality of what happened that year. It’s Friday, November 3.

David.

david shipler

Hi, Michael.

michael barbaro

I really want to thank you for making time for us.

david shipler

My pleasure.

michael barbaro

So David, in this war between Hamas and Israel, it’s feeling extremely important to understand the meaning of 1948, the year when Israel declared itself a nation, was attacked by its Arab neighbors, and waged a war of independence that displaced Palestinians on a large scale. Right now, Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is describing this current war as a second Israeli war of independence, a second 1948.

david shipler

Right.

michael barbaro

Palestinians in Gaza are invoking 1948 themselves to describe this current conflict, because of the potential for another massive dislocation from their homes.

david shipler

That’s right. Yes.

michael barbaro

But it feels like for any of these references, these claims and counter-claims, to really make sense, we need to understand why Palestinians, why Israelis, are invoking this year and what stories they tell themselves about what 1948 means. And then, of course, we need to understand what actually happened that year. And David, you arrived in Israel as the bureau chief there in the late 1970s. And so I’m curious, when you took this job, what were the ways that both Israelis and Palestinians talked about 1948?

david shipler

Well, when I arrived, there were two clashing narratives, not overlapping at all. And when you go to the Middle East, you see immediately how people are imprisoned by history, especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And I kind think of it as an arsenal of memory, that historical events that happen — and we’re in the middle of one right now — they get really chiseled in stone, in terms of the way people think about themselves and about their adversaries.

And the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is full of these markers of history. 1948 is one of the most important ones — and what Israel calls its war of independence and what the Palestinians call Nakba, the catastrophe. I mean, the

thumbnail sketch of what happened is that in May of 1948, Israel declared itself a sovereign state and immediately was attacked by a crescent of five Arab countries, which erupted into that war of independence, as Israel calls it.

And that war created the kinds of upheavals that wars do.

And every year, we can see the clash of historical narratives about this particular event vividly. Because Israel celebrates a double holiday, and Palestinians mark the event in a different way.

So Israel has, first, a day of remembrance or a memorial day. And it is a somber day. A siren sounds. People pull over to the side of the road. People stop walking in the street, and they stand for a minute or so in honor of the fallen soldiers and those who died in terrorist attacks. And then, the next day is a day of celebration, the celebration of Israel's independence.

But on May 15 every year, the Palestinians do what Israelis do on their memorial day. They stand in mourning, silently, to remember that event. So that is the sort of graphic, dramatic illustration of how the two peoples remember that war of 1948.

michael barbaro

Well, describe the two conflicting, contrasting narratives.

david shipler

Well, the key of the Palestinian narrative is the idea that all of the Arabs who left what is now Israel during the 1948 fighting were deliberately expelled by Israeli forces. The numbers are roughly 700,000, and they fled into neighboring countries. The Israeli narrative, for many years, and certainly at the time I arrived, was that no Arabs were actually expelled by the Israeli forces.

They left of their own accord, either to flee fighting, as people do in wars, or because Arab leaders advised them to leave, pending an Arab victory, after which they could return home. So the Israeli narrative is one of moral purity, because they were fighting for their existence as an independent state against Arab armies. And the Palestinian narrative was also one of moral purity and that they saw themselves as purely victims, being expelled deliberately by Israel from land they felt was rightfully theirs.

michael barbaro

And this is no small dispute — the narrative conflict that you have just described.

david shipler

No, it goes right into the present. In fact, right now, you see many Palestinians who have been urged by Israel to retreat south from northern Gaza to southern Gaza, summoning up this idea of displacement and worrying that they're not going to be allowed to come back. It's a current issue. And it translates into a yearning to return on the part of Palestinians.

michael barbaro

Right, a sentiment that we have heard over and over in talking to Palestinians in Gaza over the past few weeks.

david shipler

Yes. And I came across this years ago, when I was in the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza, a place which is being pummeled now by Israeli bombing. And I was sitting around with a few guys who were in their 20s, and a kid came in. He was a lanky boy of 12.

And somebody asked him where he was from. Now, he had been born in the Jabaliya refugee camp, but he didn't say that he was from there. He said, Barbarit. Barbarit. I said, I never heard of Barbarit. Well, hm, a couple of these guys kind of smiled and explained that it had been an Arab village up the coast that had been demolished, really, during the '48 war.

And his parents and grandparents, as it turned out as we talked more, had left that village more than 30 years before at that point. And yet, this kid said that that was where he was from.

That brought home to me how alive the yearning to return was and how Palestinian children were being taught that they were from Arab towns that had been emptied, or almost emptied.

Some had been destroyed. Some had been converted into Jewish towns, places that now, given the circumstance, they could not return, because Israel would not let them. And yet, that was the dream — to go back to those places someday and live there again, perhaps in the beautiful way that their nostalgia and the family lore described where the orchards were more fruitful than, probably, in reality, where life was more peaceful than anything they had experienced and more prosperous. So that was the dream, and it still is. It still is.

michael barbaro

So what this boy's answer to your very simple question tells us is not just how ingrained these narratives have become but how they are passed down, generation to generation. Like you said, this boy was not born in that town in Israel. He's probably never even been there. But in his mind, that is the only conceivable answer to the question of what is home.

david shipler

That's right. It's an idea, and the idea is alive and well and very motivating for many Palestinians.

michael barbaro

When you arrive in Israel, are you finding comparable versions of an ingrained narrative there around what 1948 and the birth of Israel looks like?

david shipler

Absolutely. The narrative of the '48 war was a very noble story from the Israeli standpoint. Jews were refugees from pogroms and the Holocaust in Europe. They had come to their biblical land, where there had been a Jewish presence for thousands of years. And they had created a state.

And their victory was to be celebrated and to be kept in their history and their memory as a time of great accomplishment, with all the moral purity that you could imagine. So there was no real questioning, in most of the population, about the virtue of the 1948 War. And the details of it were all kind of good.

I mean, they treated the Arabs well. They were nice to them. They didn't force them out. Some places, they even urged them to stay. In Haifa, there's a story about that — that Arabs in Haifa were urged to stay, not to flee.

And all of that — I mean, that's all part of the Israeli narrative. I remember vividly a convention, a meeting, that was in Jerusalem — the first gathering of Holocaust survivors. They've had more since.

And the theme was to pass the torch of memory to their children. Many of the Holocaust survivors had not talked about their experiences. The memories were too painful and too ugly to share with their children.

And so they came, and their children came. And they did talk with them, and they wanted to talk about all their experiences with me, too. As I walked with a tape recorder through the convention hall they would flock around me, and they would pull me aside. And you know what the theme was that many of them wanted to strike in their accounts? The theme was resistance.

We did not just go willingly like lambs to the slaughter. We resisted. And here's how we did it. We carved out our zones of agency, so to speak. And that conformed with the Israeli idea.

michael barbaro

Of 1948?

david shipler

Of 1948. To create the state and to resist and to be strong. Jews were no longer going to be massacred, and they were no longer going to be slaughtered. They were no longer going to be gassed and imprisoned.

They were going to fight back. They had the weapons. They had the will. They had the strength. We are here. This is where we will stay. We are not going anywhere. So this, to me, represents the core of the Israeli Jewish attachment to that history.

michael barbaro

OK, so these are the two very ingrained, seemingly immovable narratives that you're absorbing in your time in Israel.

david shipler

Yes. That's right. And when I first got there in 1979, I came with a sensitivity to how people can manipulate history. I had been in Moscow for four years, where I saw Soviet authorities do that distort history to suit their ideological preferences, their political ideas. And I got really interested in that whole subject how kids learned history in their schools, how the media portrayed it.

So I was tuned in on that. And soon after I arrived in Israel, I got a call from a guy who said he wanted to meet me and talk to me about something. I said, who is this?

He said, I can't say. I said, well, what's it about? He said, I can't say. I said, I thought I'd left Moscow, where this kind of thing happened all the time.

But I did meet with him. His name was Peretz Kidron, and he turned out to be the translator of Yitzhak Rabin's memoir from Hebrew to English. And the translator gave me the manuscript. And he was very upset that the censorship committee, to which all former officials had to submit manuscripts, had deleted several paragraphs, which completely changed the Israeli narrative of the '48 war.

michael barbaro

Huh. Explain that. And just put into context who Rabin is.

david shipler

Well, Itzhak Rabin had been prime minister. But at the time, he was in the opposition. He had a lot of time on his hands, I think, and he wrote this memoir. And it was very detailed. It was a good memoir.

And Rabin was commander of the Harel brigade of the Haganah. That is the Jewish forces in the '48 war. And as commander of the Harel brigade, in his description, he and Yigal Allon, who was later to become foreign minister, wanted to know what they should do about the civilian population in these two Arab towns near Tel Aviv — Lod and Ramle.

They asked David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, what should they do? And Ben-Gurion didn't answer. Didn't answer. And then, he finally took them outside and made a gesture with his hand as if to say, drive them out.

michael barbaro

In other words, drive them out. Expel them. Kick them off the land.

david shipler

That's right. And here's what Rabin wrote. "Driving out is a term with a harsh ring. Psychologically, this was one of the most difficult actions we undertook. The population of Lod did not leave willingly. There was no way of avoiding the use of force and warning shots in order to make the inhabitants march the 10-to-15 miles to the point where they met up with the Legion, meaning the Arab Legion."

And then, he goes on, and he says, "The inhabitants of Ramle watched and learned the lesson. Their leaders agreed to be evacuated voluntarily on condition that the evacuation was carried out by vehicles. Buses took them to Latrun, and from there, they were evacuated by the Legion."

And Rabin writes that some of the Israeli soldiers refused to do it and that psychological counseling had to be done for the Israeli soldiers afterwards. Because it was such a traumatic experience for them, not to mention for the Palestinians. Now, that was a complete reversal of the standard Israeli narrative, which was that at the time, no Arabs were deliberately expelled by the Israelis.

michael barbaro

Right. And this is a disruption of a very popular, widely held narrative, not just by some random soldier, but by Yitzhak Rabin.

david shipler

Yes. By Yitzhak Rabin.

michael barbaro

But of course, from what you're saying, this translator tells you that that has been censored out.

david shipler

He says it's been censored out. He gave me the manuscript. And of course, I didn't the translator and how honest he was. So I figured I needed to confirm this.

And so I called Rabin, and I went to see him. I had never met him before. This was the first time. I hadn't been in Israel long.

And I put a tape recorder on his desk. And he said, well, let's do this on background. And I said, fine. But I do have one on-therecord question I have to ask you.

And I told him about this account that I'd seen in the manuscript. And he said, well, I can't talk about it. And I said, well, why do you think they cut it out? He said, I don't know. I was surprised. Bingo. I had my confirmation.

And then, he went on to say, with a little sardonic grin, I gave the censors things to do. I wrote about Israel's nuclear weapons, for example. And I knew they'd cut that out. But I was surprised they cut this out.

michael barbaro

So in a somewhat roundabout way, Rabin confirms to you that he did write this account of expelling Palestinians in the 1948 War, that it was true, but that the Israeli government censored it out, which makes sense, given what you just said about how powerful these narratives are.

david shipler

Yes, that's right.

michael barbaro

So what did you do with this information?

david shipler

Well, I wrote a story for "The Times," and included in it the entire section of the manuscript that had been deleted by the censor.

michael barbaro

Huh.

david shipler

And I thought, well, this is going to make a big splash in Israel. There's going to be a lot of comment on this. And Israelis are very introspective, and they'll look at this and say to themselves, wow, this is quite something. I didn't know this.

michael barbaro

Mm-hmm.

david shipler

But instead, what happened was, it was a kind of muffled response. It was an effort to minimize the possibility that this really happened or to diminish its significance in terms of scope. That is, oh, a couple of towns —

michael barbaro

What you're saying is, narratives don't easily crumble.

david shipler

Narratives are very, very firmly embedded in people's need to believe things. But what happened a couple of years later was that the foreign ministry declassified documents from the 1948 War. And an Israeli journalist-turned-historian, Benny Morris, mined those declassified documents in a thorough way and wrote a very significant book detailing the towns and villages from which Arabs were expelled, those from which people just fled of their own accord, perhaps, or to get out of the way of the fighting — all of that.

So he managed to take the Israeli narrative and inject it with all of the complications and nuances that every war contains. But even though the fact that there were expulsions has been now documented, that doesn't mean that the clash of historical narratives has been resolved. Not at all. Not at all.

And so I became very interested in exploring what actually happened during that war.

michael barbaro

We'll be right back.

David, once the door opens to a reinterpretation of the narratives around 1948, and we get all this reporting and declassification of documents, and a kind of truer version of events emerges, what do you actually understand to have been the accurate story of 1948?

david shipler

Well, to go back a little bit before 1948, to set the stage, it's important to understand, as Israelis will point out, that there was,

basically, an unbroken Jewish presence in the Holy Land from biblical times. There were very intense religious communities in Jerusalem, in Hebron, now in the West Bank, in Safed in the Galilee.

And in the 19th century, late-19th century, more Jews began to come from both Arab countries and from Europe, and also in accordance with a movement, a cause, an idea called Zionism, which was developed as the notion that there should be a Jewish state, independent, strong, on that ancient land. And at that time, that area of Palestine, from the Jordan River to the

Mediterranean, which is the land in dispute, was ruled by the British under a mandate that had been decided on by the League of Nations in the wake of World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was defeated.

michael barbaro

The predecessor to the United Nations.

david shipler

That's right, the precursor to the United Nations — the League of Nations. So the British-ruled Palestine under that mandate. The Jews who came to live in that area in those years, before World War II even, encountered a mixture of reception by Arabs who had lived on that land for generations. They were not newcomers.

And they were a mixed group, so to speak. I mean, there were Muslims. There were Christians. There were Druze, a religion that keeps its tenets secret. There were Bedouins, who are semi-nomadic.

So it was a mixture of Arabs of different affinities and different family lines and not necessarily identifying themselves with the word, Palestinian. That identity, that label, developed later. But nevertheless, they were attached to their land — I mean, their birthplaces, their families' birthplaces.

And when Jews came in from Europe, many of the Arabs saw them as interlopers, aliens, colonialists, as they had seen the British — even though, for Israeli Jews, the notion that they're colonialists, or were at that time, is very odd and foreign. Because it wasn't that there were French who were in Algeria who could just go home, or Brits in India who could just go home.

That was their home. That was their new home. They had no other place. And some of the Jews were mostly farmers at that point. I mean, they were forming kibbutzim, you know, were trying to find places on what they consider to be empty land.

But in some cases, the land was grazing land. It might not have been cultivated, but it was used for grazing for goats and so forth. So the very presence was considered somewhat aggravating to some of the local Arabs, and that was not a welcome development from the point of view of many of the Arabs.

michael barbaro

So there was a Zionist movement, a push for a Jewish State, long before World War II and the Holocaust.

david shipler

Yes, that's right. You know, World War II ended in 1945. 6 million Jews had been slaughtered by the Nazis. Many, many others had feared for their lives and become refugees. And internationally, there was a great sympathy for the Jews and for the idea that they ought to have a refuge, a homeland.

And a natural homeland, according to the Zionists, was in the biblical lands. So in 1947, the United Nations passed a partition plan dividing that land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River into two states, an Arab state and a Jewish state.

michael barbaro

Take this British-controlled land, and basically give some to these Jews who were there and some to the Arab population that was there.

david shipler

That's right, exactly. And if you look at the boundaries of that partition plan in 1947, it looks like a gerrymandered congressional district. But they basically followed the lines of the Jewish population in the area, and they left out of the Jewish state areas that were mostly Arab. But there was mixture on both sides.

I mean, there were certainly Arabs in the parts that were designated as a Jewish state. What happened then was that the Jewish forces accepted the partition plan, and the Arabs did not. The Arabs within the area rejected it, and Arab countries rejected it.

The Jews accepted this partition, from what I've read in history, because they felt fairly weak, militarily, and figured this was as good as they could get. And they were going to get a state. And I think there was a sense that the Arab countries thought that they were superior militarily and could easily defeat this ragtag army that was getting its weapons from Czechoslovakia, mostly.

They did not get any weapons from the United States, by the way, at that time. The US was trying to stay out of it. You know, it had a little kind of skeleton of an air force, but it wasn't going to be much of a foe, a real opponent. I mean, they could get rolled over.

And I think that was probably the assumption at the time. And also, there was just, from inside, to the — local Arabs didn't want this Jewish state either, because they were interlopers. They were Europeans coming in, foreigners, not indigenous to the land, and therefore, had no real right there. They were not accepting of that. And in

May of 1948, the time at which the mandate by the British was to end, the British withdrew, and Israel declared its independence, and then was attacked.

michael barbaro

Instantly.

david shipler

Yes, that's correct. Arab armies from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, too, which sent a unit under Egyptian control, attacked. And the 1948 War began.

michael barbaro

And what happens once the Arab neighbors of this new nation of Israel attack?

david shipler

There was a lot of fighting, and the fight went on from May of 1948 until early in 1949. And the Israelis turned out to be stronger than the Arabs thought they would be. And they were effective enough to defeat the Arab armies and roll them back and actually expand the boundaries of what became Israel beyond what the partition plan had provided.

Now, what they didn't get at that time was the Gaza Strip, which was in the hands of Egypt. That remained in Egyptian hands. And they didn't get the West Bank of the Jordan River, which was in the hands of Jordan and remained so until the 1967 war. And they also didn't get all of Jerusalem.

michael barbaro

And David, now that we're not just speaking about narratives but about established historical facts, what happens to the Arabs on the lands that are in question during this period when Israel is achieving these victories against these Arab countries?

david shipler

So it's true that an estimated 700,000 Arabs left what is now Israel. And they did so for a variety of reasons. Some fled the way people do in war, which is just to avoid the fighting. And some fled because Arab leaders told them to get out, pending a victory by the Arab forces, after which they could come back.

Some were expelled deliberately, as we now know, by Israeli forces. Some fled because they were afraid that they would be massacred. And there were massacres of civilians by Israeli forces. The most infamous was Deir Yassin, a village right on the outskirts of Jerusalem. And that was known before the declassification of Israeli documents.

But once those documents became available, Benny Morris found about two dozen places where civilians were massacred. And that scared a lot of other Arabs who heard about them. And even where there was no violence or demands that they leave, people fled, because they were afraid that the Israeli forces coming in would massacre them.

michael barbaro

Right.

david shipler

So those are the reasons, the basic reasons. And what the Palestinian narrative has done is to put all of the departures in the category of deliberate expulsion. And that is an exaggeration. But all the other reasons that people left don't really lessen the pain that has been passed down, generation to generation, by the Palestinians, which still animates their cause and fuels their desire to return.

michael barbaro

So not only did Israelis expel Palestinians, despite the narrative that they didn't, some Israelis participated in the killing of Arab civilians during this conflict.

david shipler

Yes. And when all of this information is disclosed from these declassified documents in the archives, it reveals that the Israeli myth is just that. It's a myth. It's very sanitized. By the way, the Palestinian myth is also a myth. So you have this clash of narratives, which you could also call clash of myths.

michael barbaro

Right. So to that point, when we think about that Palestinian narrative, that claim inherited through many generations, that the 700,000 Palestinians who left Israel were expelled from their homes during the creation of Israel, the story you're saying is more nuanced. It's more complicated than that. In part because Israel was attacked and attacked back, and there's an open war.

Like you said, some Palestinians are leaving for fear of that war. Some are leaving because they are being expelled. Some are leaving because they fear that they could be expelled or, worse, massacred. And there's no doubt that all forms of that kind of dislocation have to be wrenchingly painful.

But in a conflict where the details matter and are constantly being litigated, the historical record, from what you're saying, makes clear that not all 700,000 Palestinians were expelled forcibly by Israel, as a matter of policy. It might be more accurate to say that many of these Palestinians had to leave their homes as a result of a war.

david shipler

I think that puts it very well, yeah. I mean, there are lots of reasons that people left. The war at the core of it, of course. And it's pretty ugly, war is. Terrible things happen, and they did in 1948.

Now, in some places, they were allowed to come back. But most of the Arabs who left or were driven out during the '48 War were never allowed to return to their homes inside what is now Israel. It's probably worth noting also that many Arabs did not leave, and stayed in Israel, and now, they and their descendants make up about 20 percent of Israel's population.

michael barbaro

So David, at the end of the 1948 War, when Israel emerges victorious, what does the world look like for both of these peoples is rallies as well as Palestinians who have, through a combination of expulsions and flight, are not on their lands?

david shipler

Well, at that point, Israel was trying to build up their resilience and build up their economy and fulfill their dream of building a Jewish state. And it wasn't just Palestinians who were displaced. Many Jews living in Arab countries were expelled by those countries and fled of their own accord sometimes. Most ended up in Israel, and the results of that population shift are seen in Israel today, where at least 1/2 of the population are now descended from Jews who lived in Arab countries.

michael barbaro

And the Palestinians?

david shipler

Well, the Palestinians were scattered into a diaspora in many countries around the world. But the bulk of them, at least at first, ended up in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, which controlled the West Bank at the time, and in the Gaza Strip, which was under Egyptian control. So that diaspora, so to speak, which ended up in the refugee camps, is still conscious of its origins and has passed down, through the generations, the story of displacement.

michael barbaro

David, why wasn't there a creation of a Palestinian state after Israel's victory? Because there are still these people who had been promised, through the partition, a country, just as the people of Israel have been promised a country. Why didn't a Palestinian state emerge in the aftermath of this war?

david shipler

Remember that this was a war not between the Palestinians and the Israelis. This was a war between Arab countries and the new state of Israel. So at the end of the war of '48, armistice agreements were signed that established the borders of Israel. And what wasn't Israel was Arab states.

So there was no talk that I'm aware of creating a so-called Palestinian state. I don't know that the concept was in the conversation at that point. Through the years, despite lip service given to the Palestinian cause by Arab leaders, their interest in supporting that cause has been — aside from being rhetorical, has really been wanting. The Palestinians were not accepted as citizens, by and large, in the Arab countries where they fled. Palestinians have been victims of the Arab world as well as of the Israelis.

michael barbaro

And what is life like for these Palestinians as refugees in the period after the war?

david shipler

The population was very impoverished. The refugee camps began as tent camps. They're still called camps, although that's a misnomer. They've become established slums.

The poverty rate is still fairly high. It's very difficult for Palestinians to have a comfortable and prosperous life when they're confined to the camps. And lots of Palestinians have left the camps and been able to emigrate to various countries in Europe, the United States.

And so those folks are doing better. But it's not so easy to get the visas. It's not so easy to accumulate the money to make that change. And there's an ideological resistance to doing it, too.

I remember at one point, when I was there, Israel wanted to build housing outside refugee camps in Gaza, and the local Palestinians rejected the idea vehemently. Because they thought it was an effort to undermine their status as refugees to, basically, do what's now called normalize the occupation. So there's a whole history of attempting to keep alive the idea of displacement, the refugee status, and the yearning to return.

michael barbaro

And from the Israeli point of view, the idea of return for these Palestinians represents what?

david shipler

A threat to the existence of the Jewish state, for two reasons. One, the Jews would be outnumbered by the Arabs in the voting rolls. Right now, if you take the West Bank and Gaza and Israel proper altogether, and East Jerusalem, the population division is about even, maybe even slightly tipped toward the Arab side. So if it opened pluralistic, fair, free democracy, Arabs would outvote Jews.

So that's one issue. The other is the security concerns. I mean, we've just seen it in the Hamas attacks, where Israeli Jews were attacked in their homes and their kibbutzim. And the notion that lots of Palestinians would be allowed to come in and live inside Israel terrifies Israelis.

michael barbaro

David, we've spent a lot of time here, trying to understand narratives and reality. But the more time you spend understanding 1948 and the context surrounding it, it seems the thing that becomes very clear is that Palestinians and Israelis emerged from it with a strong claim to being victims. Israelis are victims of Arab countries seeking Israel's destruction at the moment of its birth and the forces of anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust and, in the minds of so many Israelis, necessitated Israel in the first place.

Palestinians are victims of the war that results from Israel's creation, including Israeli tactics that forced many of them from their homes and, later, by the rejection that Palestinians faced from their Arab neighbors. And the fact that Israel won the war and Palestinians and their allies lost doesn't really change their view of themselves as victims.

david shipler

Exactly right, Michael. Exactly right. They are both victims. I remember an Israeli telling me once, when you put two victims together, it's like mixing fire and kerosene. Neither side recognizes the other's victimhood, although you have to say that there are some Israelis who do see the Palestinians as victims, even of the '48 War.

After the declassification of documents showing that there were expulsions of Arabs, that fact worked its way into some Israeli textbooks at the university level, and then also at the secondary school level, to an extent. I think Israelis have come to see that there were such expulsions, and there were injustices, but that has not overcome the sense of great pride and accomplishment in creating the state through that war of independence.

And there are some Palestinians who see Jewish victimhood. But when they speak publicly about it, they get themselves into trouble. There was a professor at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem who used to teach a course on the Holocaust to Palestinian college students, and he actually took them to visit Auschwitz.

And he got them to see Jews as victims and understand the historical roots of their arrival in this place, this Holy Land. And what happened to him? He was threatened, and ultimately, he was fired.

So the obstacles to seeing the other and recognizing what the other has gone through are immense. They're immense. So we have here a conflict between two peoples who are victims of each other, but not only of each other, also of the larger world.

michael barbaro

Right. And in this case, how you understand the conflict and how you understand the whole question of victimhood depends very much on where you start the clock, where you think the story begins.

david shipler

Exactly right.

michael barbaro

David, thank you very much. We really appreciate it.

david shipler

Thanks for listening. michael

barbaro

We'll be right back.

Here's what else you need to know today. Sam Bankman-Fried, the founder of the doomed cryptocurrency exchange FTX, was convicted on all charges of fraud and conspiracy on Thursday after a month-long trial that exposed the hubris and risk-taking across the crypto industry. The conviction puts Bankman-Fried in league with the biggest financial fraudsters in history. Overall, his victims lost nearly \$10 billion in funds, and he now faces a sentence of up to 110 years in prison.

And on Thursday, the Israeli military said it had encircled Gaza City and was waging close-quarters combat with Hamas as they pushed forward with what Israeli officials have predicted will be a long and bloody ground invasion. Meanwhile —

wafa al-saqqa

Good morning from Rafah. I just arrived to the crossing. They're going to start calling people. I know my name is on the list, but I don't know when I will enter.

michael barbaro

The evacuation of foreign nationals and wounded Palestinians from Gaza into Egypt entered its second day on Thursday. Among those leaving was Wafa Al-Saqqa, the subject of a "Daily" Episode on October 16. When the war broke out, Al-Saqqa, an American citizen who had grown up in Gaza, became trapped in Gaza where she was visiting family.

wafa al-saqqa

(CRYING) I'm glad that I'm going to go and meet with my grandson and my husband and my boys and their wives. So —

michael barbaro

At 1:30 PM local time on Thursday, she crossed into Egypt, then boarded a minivan, with other Americans, bound for Cairo.

wafa al-saqqa

(CRYING) I don't know how I feel. I left my whole family behind. Needed my help, but I couldn't help them. But I need to go to my other family, too. I don't know why we have to choose.

michael barbaro

Today's episode was produced by Will Reid and Rikki Novetsky with help from Rob Szytko. It was edited by Paige Cowett, with help from Lisa Chow, fact-checked by Susan Lee, contains original music by Elisheba Ittoop, Dan Powell, Marion Lozano, and Sophia Lanman, and was engineered by Chris Wood.

Our theme music is by Jim Brunberg and Ben Landsverk of Wonderly. Special thanks to Serge Schmemmann, Jodi Rudoren, Steven Erlanger, and Clyde Haberman.

That's it for "The Daily." I'm Michael Barbaro. See you on Monday.