



## Zochrot Annual Report 2019

January 2020

## **Opening**

As can be clearly shown in the report below, Zochrot activity and public outreach had increased significantly in 2019. During the time of the report, January 2019 – December 2019 we had carried out more than 60 different activities in public sphere including tours to destroyed Palestinian localities, lectures, symposiums, workshops, exhibition, educational courses, film festival, direct actions and more, all designed to make the Nakba present in public spaces, to resist the ongoing Nakba, and to oppose the mechanisms of denial and erasure. We continue to call upon Israelis to acknowledge their responsibility for the Nakba and to uphold justice by supporting Palestinian return. Over 2,400 people participated in our activities over the past year and took an active part in discussion about the Nakba and return. This year we also reached almost 100,000 visitors on our websites, which continues to be a leading resource to many people all over the world about the Nakba and the Return.

## **About Zochrot**

Zochrot ("remembering" in Hebrew) is a grassroots NGO working since 2002 in Palestine-Israel to promote acknowledgement of and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948. Zochrot works towards the reconceptualization of the right of return as the imperative redress of the Nakba and a chance for a better life for all the country's inhabitants. Zochrot is the first and major Israeli nonprofit organization and growing movement devoted to the commemoration of the Nakba and for advocating for Palestinian return, first and foremost among the Jewish Israeli majority in Israel.

The Nakba, 'Catastrophe' in Arabic, is the mass destruction and depopulation of Palestine in 1948, during the war that led to the founding of the state of Israel. Palestinians who were expelled during the Nakba have since grown to become the largest refugee population in the world according to the UN. Within Israel, quarter of a million Palestinians live as 'internally displaced' persons and are denied the right to their land, homes and property.

The uprooting of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland as both external and internal refugees, preventing them from returning to their homes, the destruction of Palestinian towns and village with barely a trace, the expropriation of their lands and assets, the Judaization and Hebraization of the entire country and the erasure of the Palestinian-Arab-Oriental history, identity and memory of the local space are only some of the crimes Zochrot is working to expose to the Israeli public.

The completion of the occupation of Palestine in 1967, the military rule over the West Bank, the blockade on Gaza, the ongoing forced exile of some seven million Palestinians, the patronizing, racist and brutal policies towards all Palestinians, including Israel's nominal Palestinian citizens – all testify to the ongoing nature of the Nakba. For years, Israel has systematically hidden evidence of the Nakba, hiding the Nakba and the right of the Palestinians to return, from the public eyes. Over the years, Zochrot has been active in bringing the Nakba and the right to return to public spaces, teaching the Israeli public about the Nakba and its injustices, calling upon Israeli Jews to acknowledge their responsibility for the Nakba and to promote justice and redress. We have spoken Nakba and Return in Hebrew and managed – despite our limited resources – to open the eyes of many Israelis. We do so through education, art, tours, lectures, workshops, films, booklets, maps, games, advocacy, campaigns, direct actions and more.

Since 1948 the state of Israel has been trying to erase all remains of the Nakba and the Palestinian life that preceded it: the Nakba is absent from the Israeli education system, erased from its landscape, and the Palestinian tragedy is overwhelmingly denied. However, over the past years, and due in part to Zochrot's work, the term 'Nakba' has become part of the Israeli discourse although its mere presence still does not mean an understanding of its meaning, let alone the broad acknowledgement of and accountability for the events of 1948 and their ongoing effects until this very day.

Zochrot sees the Nakba as the 'ground zero' of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and believes that all other appearances of violence or human rights violations since 1948 to this very day (including the occupation of 1967), are the symptoms of this root cause. Thus, Zochrot believes that Jewish Israeli accountability for the Nakba and related aspects of oppression of Palestinians, will pave the way for a just and sustainable resolution of the conflict.

For the past 17 years, Zochrot has been working to create sustainable projects aiming at 'cracking' the system and challenging the taboo in Israel over the Nakba and Return. Zochrot's program is multilayered, and by working in different fields and various methods the organization is implementing both large scale projects which address the wide public, as well as small participatory projects that sustain and nurture a pool of social change agents who can affect a larger impact in their communities and among their peers.

### **2019 Context**

Zochrot continued to face a challenging political and social context in 2019 in pursuing its mission of advocating increased awareness and discussion of the Nakba in public discourse and of advocating for Palestinian refugees' right of return. The political environment remains hostile to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), particularly critical and dissident ones.

For most of 2019, Israel had no stable government. This has meant that no new restrictions on NGOs have come into being, since no government existed to introduce laws and the Knesset, Israel's parliament, has not been able to pass laws. However, extended campaign season that lasted throughout the year also meant that we faced more extreme public discourse and continuing de-legitimization of critical voices, demonization of Palestinians and, by extension, of any individual or organization supportive of the Palestinian struggle for justice.

Existing laws targeting Zochrot remain on the books. These include:

1. The 2011 "Nakba" law, which empowered the Finance Minister to reduce state funding and support for institutions that either view Israeli Independence Day as a day of mourning or that oppose Israel's Jewish and democratic self-definition. Zochrot gets no funding from the state but cultural institutions collaborating with us were threatened with withdrawal of funds.
2. The 2016 NGO "funding transparency" law requiring NGOs receiving funding from foreign institutional sources to disclose their funding to government officials and in their written reports, subject to stringent fines for violation. These laws are part of a broader trend of Israeli government policies seeking to limit the free expression of NGOs, especially ones advocating narratives countering the dominant Zionist one, and to delegitimize them.
3. The 2018 law banning organizations that criticize war crimes by the Israeli Army from entering schools. This has created a significant chilling effect for our constituencies in schools. We hear from teachers who are hesitant about inviting us to speak to students or even about breaching the subject of Nakba and Return in class, and we are finding ever more creative ways to deal with this shrinking space.

Israel's elections in 2019 have been between two right-wing parties: the Likud, which has been in power for over a decade, and Blue and White, a party whose main goal is removing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from office but is otherwise right-wing. Neither party is likely to relax restrictions on NGO activity. And while the Likud was the chief promoter of the 2018 "nation-state" law, which declared Jews to be the only recognized nationality in Israel and called Jewish settlement a "national value," Blue and White's leaders have never indicated they would repeal the law.

Internationally, the actions of the Trump presidency in relation to Israel have also affected Zochrot. In March 2019, the United States recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights as legal. In November 2019, United States Secretary of State Pompeo declared that the United States now considered Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be "not per se inconsistent with international law." Zochrot views Israeli settlement, and the displacement of Palestinians accompanying it, in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights as a continuation of the Nakba of 1948. The home demolitions ongoing in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem and the expansion of Jewish settlements are also part of this "ongoing Nakba." Israel's major international sponsor declaring its support for the ongoing Nakba is a significant negative event.

The subject of "return," brought back to Israeli discourse through the Palestinians' Great March of Return in Gaza beginning in March 2018, coincided with an increase in discussion of return in Israeli politics. Unfortunately, this discussion has been accompanied by fear mongering, dehumanizing language. Israel once again bombarded Gaza in May and November 2019, killing 25 Palestinians in May and 35 in November, and wounding more than 250 in total. As Zochrot continues to advocate for the right of Palestinians to return, countering these brutal actions will be even more important. Zochrot is working in turning the government's scare tactics into a productive and creative conversation around the Palestinian refugees among different Israeli publics Even with Israeli civil society space shrinking. When a new government takes office, Zochrot sees it as an opportunity to advance sustainable rights-based approaches that will lead to Israeli society taking responsibility for the past and ongoing Nakba and looking forward to a future of return.

We are well aware that promoting the acknowledgment for the Nakba and advocate for the return of Palestinian refugees in the current political reality in Israel/Palestine, in the Middle East and internationally is very challenging. Nevertheless, we see it as obvious that no just solution would ever be possible without realizing Palestinians' right to return.

Therefore, we are determined to raise the issue in every possible forum, to make sure it remains on the public agenda, and to oppose Israel's policy and tactics of denying the Nakba, dismissing and violating the right of return.

We believe that in the current political situation, in times that Palestinians are louder in their demand for return, there is an opportunity to advance a discourse about the issue of the Palestinian refugees and put forth a collective civil society action that is talking about practical and sustainable non militaristic solutions for the return of Palestinian refugees.

### **Target Group**

Zochrot aims first and foremost to impact the Jewish Israeli constituency. Throughout the year, our activities are open to the wide public, with an emphasis on working with social agents who are able to provide gateways to their communities and through them, to the wider public. Social agents include activists, teachers and educators who work in Israel's formal and informal education systems, artists of various media, filmmakers, writers, scholars, planners, and more individuals who work in their own communities. As a crucial part of our work, Zochrot continues to reach out to the wide public and social agents in both the large central cities and increasingly in the Israeli periphery. Most of Zochrot's online materials are translated to Arabic and English, translation is also available in some of our activities. Thus, Palestinians and internationals are a secondary target group of Zochrot.

## **Overall Goal**

To realize its vision, Zochrot acts to promote Israeli Jewish society's acknowledgement of and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba and the reconceptualization of Return as the imperative redress of the Nakba and a chance for a better life for all the country's inhabitants.

## **Mission and Purpose**

To initiate, support and sustain public discourse, in Israel on the Nakba and its ongoing effects, particularly the situation of the Palestinian refugees. We believe acknowledgment of the past is the first step towards taking responsibility for its consequences, and thus hope to contribute to a realistic resolution of the conflict, which will include a just solution to the situation of Palestinian refugees

Zochrot acts to challenge the Israeli Jewish public's preconceptions and to promote awareness, political and cultural change within it to create the conditions for the Return of Palestinian Refugees and a shared life in this country. To do so, Zochrot generates processes in which Israeli Jews will reflect on and review their identity, history, future and the resulting discourse through which they conceive of their lives in this country. Our focus on the Jewish target audience derives from its practical and moral responsibility for Palestinian refugeehood, as well as from its privileged power position under the present regime.

## **Goals**

1. To increase the presence of the Return in public discourse;
2. The injustices of the ongoing Nakba and Return as its imperative redress will have become an urgent item on the Israeli Jewish public's agenda, with more and more people realizing that return is essential and critical to a better society;
3. To transform the public discourse so that the linkage between Nakba and Return is understood, together with the fact that the Nakba is an ongoing reality with no end in sight, rather than a one-time historic event;
4. To seek the truth that provides an account of past abuses and injustice around the Nakba and to encourage Israelis to take individual and collective responsibility for it;
5. To generate avant-garde, creative discursive spaces involving the Nakba and Return.

## **Zochrot's Partners**

Zochrot is grateful for the support of Christian Aid, Misereor, Heks-Eper, AFSC, MCC, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, St. Het Solidariteitsfonds, Urgent Action Fund, EMHRF, Kaleidoscope, Sivmo, Jerusalem Fund, Haella Foundation, Sparkplug Foundation and private individuals who support our work.





## Zochrot's Main Activities for 2019





## Educational Activities

### ▪ "How do you say Nakba in Hebrew" – Study group in Jerusalem

In early 2019, Zochrot conducted a study group about the Nakba under the guidance of Lihi Joffe. A total of 17 men and women participated in the study group aiming to learn more about the Nakba, about the Palestinian life that was here and about the Palestinian refugees and how these have been silenced in Israeli society. The group also discussed the return of refugees, and practices of dispossession and injustice while dealing with guilt, anger, taking responsibility and creating hope.



In the pictures: Drawings from the workshop



### ▪ "The Hope Study Program"

This year we continued to work toward the production of an educational tool "The Hope Study Program" for educators. We have completed the design of the presentations that accompany the curriculum and also we have completed the text of all the lesson plans of the program. This tool is to be published during 2020.

### ▪ Questionnaire for teachers

This year we wanted to evaluate the educational work with our teachers and learn more about how they teach about the Nakba in school. We wanted to assess the teachers' needs, understand what is more successful and what is less, what are their key challenges, what is being taught by them and what is not being taught and why. With the support from an intern coming to Zochrot from the US, we have created a questionnaire. The questionnaire can be answered on-line as in an interview. So far 23 teachers have answered the questionnaire and with the help of our volunteers we continue to contact more teachers. From interviews collected until now, some interesting insights were gathered such as the request of the teachers to receive more materials and tools that can be taught within the official curriculum as well as requests to receive the "How do you say Nakba in Hebrew?" study guide to school libraries and teachers' rooms.

### ▪ **Teacher training**

During 2019, we took part in initiating a forum of educational coordinators from different civil society organizations that work with teachers and in a similar field to us. Several teachers joined the forum, and following that they initiated a formal training program in political education for teachers in the entire Tel Aviv District. During the training, the teachers went through a process of learning about political education and an acquaintance with the contents of political education of the various organizations. The training started late 2019 and was attended by about 20 teachers.



### ▪ **Somayle Tour and Teachers Workshop**

As part of the Tel Aviv District Teacher Training course, we conducted a tour and workshop in the Somayle displaced village, located in the center of Tel Aviv, right next to the school where the training took place. The tour demonstrated how the Nakba is located close to the home, school, streets and car parks we pass through every day (the car park in Somayle covers the village's cemetery). An important and in-depth conversation developed around the questions: How can we teach it, can Israeli students be taught about the Nakba? What will happen to them in this process? Does learning about the Nakba mean giving up our privileges as Jews? And what would happen to this space if we did not have these privileges and power relations changed here? Is it possible to promote a just and equitable society in this place and what is our role as teachers in all this?

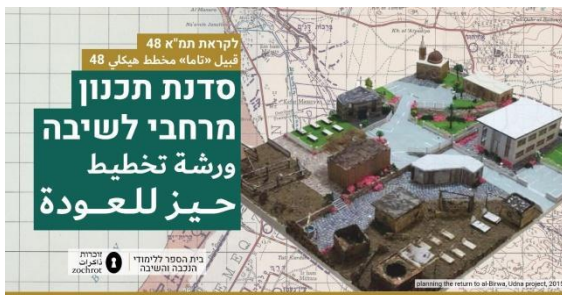
### ▪ **Shuruch - Cracks in the Literature Curriculum**

During 2019, Ayana Ardal, a highly experienced literature teacher, wrote the "Shuruch" booklet - Cracks in the Literature Curriculum. This is another tool Zochrot offers to teachers in the field of literature on how to teach about the Nakba. The booklet includes varied and fascinating lesson plans for teachers to use, while following the official curriculum of literary works in types of poetry, plays, short story, novels and essays. The booklet is being made ready for print and will be published in 2020.



- **"Towards TAMA 48 - Spatial Planning for Return"**

This year we continued the project "Towards TAMA 48 - Spatial Planning for Return" intended for planning professionals (architects, urban planners, engineers and more). In previous years, Zochrot held an introductory workshop for planning professionals in Tel Aviv and a planning workshop in Haifa. This year we opened a group in al-lyd (Lod). The workshop was attended by 10 Palestinians and Israelis under the guidance of Fida Shahada, an urban planner. The purpose of the workshop was to examine the presence and absence of the Nakba in the planning field, and to learn about planning tools and projects which are based on the principles of justice and planning. The group learned about planning in Lod in the context of Nakba and return and met with planning, academics, activists and more.



- **Workshop in Jerusalem.**

16 students participated in a seminar about the Nakba and Return - Getting acquainted with initial knowledge of the Nakba, the process of erasing the Nakba and Palestinian life, and what do we really mean when we say "The return of the Palestinian refugees"?

- **Workshop for students at the Givat Haviva International School**

18 students, Palestinians, Israeli and international participated in Zochrot's workshop as part of their conflict resolution and peace training. We have introduced them with Zochrot's work and especially how return is a just solution that can promote peace and common life in our space.



Fatma Shanan, Razan and Adan #2, 2011, oil on canvas, 100X150 cm, private collection, Israel

▪ **The Nakba, Ashkenazim, Mizrahim and Accountability Research Presentations & Discussion**

35 participants took part in the [discussion](#) on who bears the “Jewish responsibility for the Nakba”? When discussing accountability, can we ignore ethno-class aspects within Jewish-Israeli society? And how is the ongoing Palestinian Nakba related to the oppression of Mizrahim in Israel?

Two studies addressing those questions, written as part of Zochrot’s Nakba, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim research group, were presented and discussed:

1. The Sephardic Community Council in Jerusalem, 1949: Constructing a zero-sum Zionism / Michal Haramati: In her article, Michal inquires how the settler-colonial regime and its constitution through the 1948 war affected the country’s native (Sephardic) Jews.

2. The Nakba, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim: Questions about Dialogue between Jews and Palestinians / Michal Zak: A moderator of dialogue groups between Palestinians and Jews, Michal examines how the Jewish ethnic aspects can be introduced into the dialogue group practices. Panelists and respondents:

- Dr. Rabah Halabi of Oranim College and the Hebrew University has been working for two decades in the area of encounters between Palestinians and Jews. Dr. Halabi writes and edits articles and books on those encounters, identity and education, multicultural education and critical pedagogy.
- Tom Mehager is a Mizrahi activist, blogger on Haokets website, moderator of Zochrot’s Nakba, Ashkenazim and Mizrahim research group.



## Cultural Activities

### ▪ The Best of 48mm Film Festival - Jerusalem Cinematheque



February 7 – 14, 2019 following the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of **48mm Film Festival from Nakba to Return** in Tel Aviv in December 2018, the festival traveled to Jerusalem. **5 films by Israeli, Palestinian and international filmmakers** were screened at the Jerusalem Cinematheque. All the screenings were followed by discussions with guest speakers. About **500 viewers** came to the screenings.

Prior to the screening of one of the films, *On the Doorstep* by Palestinian director Sahera Dirbas, we organized **a tour around the Talbiye neighborhood**, guided by the director. More than **100 participants** of the tour heard stories of the exquisitely beautiful houses of the neighborhood and of their Palestinian builders and owners. Following the Nakba in 1948, all of them and their descendants became refugees, some in their own city and others spread around the world.

The series of screenings was organized in cooperation with the Jerusalem Cinematheque. There were 2 similar events at the Jerusalem Cinematheque in the past, though much smaller in scope. Encouraged by the positive cooperation and large audiences, we will continue the screenings in Jerusalem Cinematheque in 2020.

The cooperation with the Jerusalem Cinematheque is especially appreciated because they didn't yield to political pressures to cancel the screenings. Five Jerusalem city council members, including 2 deputy mayors, demanded the mayor of Jerusalem to reduce the 2019 financial support for the Cinematheque and even cancel next year's budget completely for the following reasons: Zochrot's promotion of the Palestinian right of the return, films presenting the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 war and participation of the Palestinian actor Muhammad Bakri.



▪ **Has anybody seen the photograph of an infiltrator?**



Over 100 people visited a new group exhibition held by Zochrot: In an era of occupying the world as an image, the absence of certain images from our field of vision affect the way a phenomenon is given meaning or erased from consciousness, becomes visible or remains in the dark. Starting in the 1950s, a new object appeared in Israeli discourse: “infiltration”. Tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees crossed the borders of the newly established state, attempting to return to their homes and lands, retrieve belongings left behind, visit relatives and try to remain in their homeland. In the public discourse, this was shaped as Israel’s severest political problem, hence their derogatory title, “infiltrators”. Despite the centrality of that phenomenon, infiltration appeared in the discourse almost without the mediation of visual images. In fact, it appeared as an invisible sight. The presence of those refugees/infiltrators as absence was the point of departure for the participating artists, who propose a present perspective that contains the historical event as a material sign that cannot be dismissed or made to disappear.

Artists: Michal Bar-Or, Nir Harel, May Omer, Ronit Citri, Curator: Debby Farber







- **Return Vision Campaign and New Song**

On the day that the Eurovision final was held on the land of al-Shaykh Muwannis, May 18<sup>th</sup> & as we had commemorated the Nakba which continues to this day, we at Zochrot started a new journey of our work towards [Return Vision](#). We kicked off with a hopeful song that affirms Palestinians' return to their homes. This song, written by known Palestinian Rapper, [Tamer Nafar](#), is for every Palestinian refugee that wishes to return home, for every Palestinian that wishes to see their homeland, for every displaced Palestinian that can only see their village and for all refugees around the world that long for their return home. Nafar performed the song live in Haifa at the same time the Eurovision was held in Tel Aviv. In collaboration with a group of UK artists and with Palestinian musicians, this and other performances were [broadcasted online](#) to some 30,000 viewers worldwide.

To listen to the song and read the lyrics in English translation please [click](#)

- **Film Screening "A World Not Ours"**

There are nowadays millions of Refugees living in different areas around the globe, under different Socio-Economic situations when each refugee, from complex historical and political reasons, has been over casted under an umbrella of definitions of being a refugee. In honor of International Refugee Day we invited the public to a screening of the film "A World Not Ours" by the Palestinian director, Mahdi Fleifel.

With the use of Family archives, Personal recordings and historical footage, this intimate film enables to uncover the complex lives of refugees in the Refugee Camp, Ain Al-Helweh, in Southern Lebanon. Following the film, there was an interesting conversation and discussion about return with Rachel Beit Arie, Director of Zochrot.

- **48mm Film Festival special event: tour of the uprooted Palestinian village Iqrit and screening of the Sci-Fi Trilogy by Larissa Sansour in the village church.**





On November 23, 2019, a special event of the 48mm Film Festival took place – a tour of the uprooted Palestinian village of Iqrit and screening of the "Sci-Fi Trilogy" by Larissa Sansour. Over 80 people participated in the event.

Iqrit is a Palestinian village located on a hilltop in the northern Galilee. In November 1948, the Israeli army arrived at Iqrit demanding that the villagers leave because the area was dangerous. Most of more than 500 inhabitants were transferred to a nearby village and promised they could come back within two weeks. But the area was declared a military zone and they were forbidden from returning. The people of Iqrit took their case to the Supreme Court, which ruled in July 1951 that their evacuation had been illegal and that they must be permitted to return. On Christmas Eve of that year, however, Israeli soldiers demolished the village, leaving only the church and the cemetery intact. Later, the village's land was expropriated for state use.

Since then, the villagers have fought a legal battle that ended in 2003 with the Supreme Court rejecting their demand to be allowed to reclaim their land. The original villagers and their descendants – now more than 1,500 people scattered across northern Israel – are allowed only to hold services in the church and to bury their dead in the cemetery. In 2012, a group of young people, descendants of Iqrit's refugees, moved back in an attempt to reclaim and rebuild the village. They planted vegetables and herbs amid the rubble, and live in a makeshift structure next to the village church, where mass is celebrated every month. They also submitted a detailed master plan for their village that included construction of 500 homes. While the government's approval is still pending, the church was recently connected to the electricity grid.

Whereas the people of Iqrit want to believe in a hopeful future, insisting on their right to return, Sansour envisions the final uprootedness of the Palestinian experience and takes it to the extreme. However, she too does not give up on her right to a homeland, but offers creative ways to secure the future of her people.

As much as it is important to talk about the past, both Larissa Sansour and the people of Iqrit invited us to imagine the future as well in this moving and thought-provoking event. Nemi Ashkar, the head of the Iqrit Community Association, and Umar Al-Ghubari from Zochrot guided the tour, and curator Debby Farber and Ami Tueme of Iqrit were guest speakers at the screening.



▪ **48mm Film Festival: From Nakba to Return 2019**



The seventh edition of the 48mm Film Festival: From Nakba to Return took place on November 29-30, 2019 at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque and the Left Bank Cine Club. For 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

**15 films by Israeli, Palestinian and international filmmakers** were screened at the festival. The festival paid **Homage to Ram Loevy**, who has created some of the most daring and politically subversive films in Israeli TV and cinema, many of them dealing with the Nakba and the fate of the Palestinian refugees. Most of the screenings were followed by discussions with guest speakers. About **700 viewers** came to the festival's seven screenings and a tour.

The festival was opened with a very special and moving event - **tour and screening in the Palestinian village of Iqrit** (see above).

As every year, we screened a film about Gaza to expose the Israeli viewers to what's really happening there as the result of the Israeli blockade and periodic bombardments of the Gaza Strip. The screening of **Gaza**, the Irish Oscar nominee, was supported by the Embassy of Ireland and opened by James C. O'Shea, Deputy Head of Mission.

One of the highlights of the festival was the screening of the multi-award winning film **Wajib** and the fascinating discussion with the director Annemarie Jacir, producer Ossama Bawardi, and the film's stars Mohammad Bakri and Saleh Bakri.

Another festival's highlight was **Imagine If You Dare**: screening of short films exploring the most taboo subject in Israeli society - the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, followed by an eye-opening and inspiring panel on the subject. The collection of 7 films by Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers included also films produced by Zochrot for previous festivals or as part of the Udna project.

The media coverage included **three big reviews in Hebrew**, including one by the leading Israeli film critic Avner Shavit.

You can read more about the festival's program [here](#).



## Activism & Landscape for Return

### ▪ Tours for organizations and groups

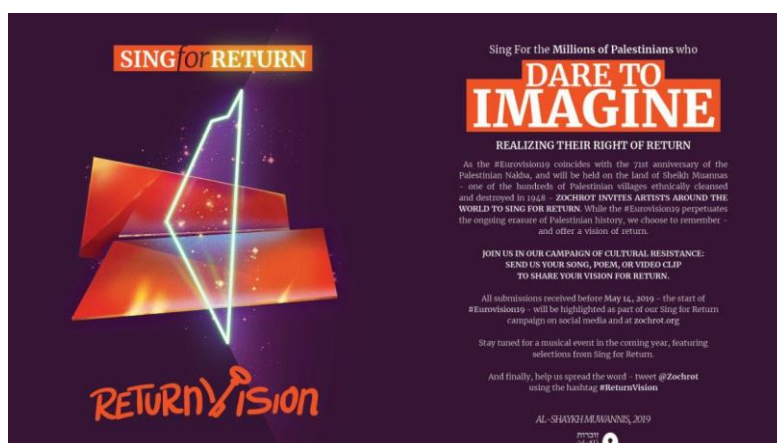
In 2019 Zochrot held 23 tours to destroyed Palestinian localities for interested groups and organizations (such as schools, universities, Ngo's etc'). These tours are aimed at educating participants regarding the silenced stories of the landscape and the possibilities of future return to it.

The participants included groups from The Arava institute for environmental studies, Parents Circle, Sadaqa-Reut youth movement, Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University and Beer Sheva Hagar Bi-Lingual school's parents community, among many others.

### ▪ From Gaza to Al-Shaykh Muwannis: Tour and event on Nakba, Refugeehood and Return

On land day, together with dozens of Israeli Participants, Zochrot held a political event in Al-Shaykh Muwannis calling for the return of Palestinian refugees and protesting against the Eurovision. The event included a short tour with Umar Al-Ghubary, explanation about the history of the villages and the circumstances of its occupation and ethnic cleansing and a call for realizing the right of return.

On March 30, 1948, the Haganah Jewish militia occupied the village of Al-Shaykh Muwannis. The troops expelled all its inhabitants and turned them into refugees. Subsequently, the State of Israel destroyed most of their houses, prevented their return, built the Tel Aviv University and residential neighborhoods for Israelis on their lands, as well as various colleges, museums and parks, including the municipal Yarkon Park. In mid-May, the Eurovision song contest would be held on the land of the village refugees. Some of them currently live in the Gaza Strip.





▪ **Protesting in solidarity with Gaza and For Return**

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, Zochrot in collaboration with other organizations and activist groups initiated a solidarity protest with Gaza and for the return in the center of Tel Aviv. Around 300 protesters demonstrated in front of Hakirya military base and Ministry of Defense in Tel Aviv, in solidarity with the Great March of Return in Gaza. The protesters called on the occupation forces to stop shooting demonstrators, stop the bombing and end the siege. They also demanded an end to the occupation in all its forms, and the return of the Palestinian refugees.



▪ **Movement of Return // remember Dayr Yasin**

**We vote for remembering the victims and reminding the truth. We vote for a future of hope. We vote for the right of return of the refugees of Dayr Yasin and all other Palestinian refugees**

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the 71<sup>st</sup> Memorial Day of the massacre of DayrYasin, we held a commemoration event at the site of the massacre and publicly called for Israelis to [join a movement for return](#). The Israeli early elections were held on the same day, so on the day that the public was asked to vote in a false show of democracy that avoids the real issues, promotes men who are responsible for war crimes and leaves out Palestinians, we called on our sisters and brothers to make a real choice, to elect to remember and to symbolically vote for the Right to Return – an issue that wasn't on any party's agenda in the general elections but that should be on top of everyone's agenda if we truly seek for justice and lasting peace.

We continue to ask Israelis and Internationals to [join in support](#) of this movement and call for the right to return to be implemented. Supporters are asked to [sign](#) this declaration of support, share it with their friends and families and help Zochrot grow. About 250 Supporter have already signed the declaration.

**The event was held on Tuesday, April 9 at Dayr Yasin with about 50 participants.** The event included a procession along the main street of Dir Yassin, today Kanfei Nesharim Street in Givat Shaul neighborhood in Jerusalem; bearing signs with the victims' names; explanation about the attack and the massacre; observing village remains – private houses, the school and cemetery; and reading the names of the victims aloud. The event also included a ceremonial gathering in favor of the return of the refugees behind what is now the Kfar Shaul Psychiatric Hospital.



- **Return Vision – May 8th - Talking about refugee return on the eve of “Independence Day” – film screening and discussion**

On the eve in which many celebrate the state that was built on the ashes of the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, Zochrot invited the public to talk about the return of Palestinian refugees. **We watched a new film documenting Israelis who have dared imagine what return** will look like and how it could be implemented (Produced for Zochrot by Social TV) Together with a fascinating panel of 2 new members of the parliament MK Hiba Yazbek - member of the "Balad\ al-Tajammu' & RA'AM: Arab United" list and MK Ofer Casif - member of "Hadash\ al-Jabha & TA'AL: Arab movement for Renewal" list. Member of the headship of the Israeli Communist party; over 70 participants shared their thoughts on how to promote return and how the future can look different – more just, more hopeful. Later that evening, a group of activists carried out a direct action in the streets of Tel Aviv to engage Israelis with the issue of return and the Palestinian refugees.



- **March of Return**

As in every year Zochrot joined the March of Return organized by ADRID. This year Zochrot's director Rachel Beit Arie was on stage as a representative and called activists and supporters to join the movement of Israeli Jews to support the return of the Palestinian refugees and IDPs. The march took place in the Khubbayza destroyed village land, south to Haifa.

- **Return Flotilla**

To mark the 71st anniversary of the Nakba, on May 15, Zochrot organized, on Saturday May 18, a Memory, Recognition and Return event in the city of Yaffa (Jaffa). The event included a one-hour boat ride from Jaffa port along Tel-Aviv shore, symbolizing the moments of Palestinians' deportation from the city, calling for realizing the return of refugees and inviting participants to imagine actual return. After disembarking, we went on a walking tour from the port to Al-Manshiyya neighborhood, stopping at several landmarks to talk about the time and place, on past and future, on Nakba and Return.

Established in 1879, al-Manshiyya neighborhood was occupied together with the rest of Jaffa and almost all of its inhabitants became refugees. These days, not far from the mosque, in the park where the Palestinian houses bulldozed by the municipality are buried, a “tourist village” has been built for the pleasure of Eurovision fans. Note that the event itself is held in the Yarkon Park on the lands of al-Shaykh Muwannis – another Palestinian community depopulated and destroyed 71 years ago.

About 70 people took part in this important event, designed to commemorate the Nakba and call upon the Israeli public to take responsibility and correct the wrongs perpetrated by the State of Israel and the Zionist movement against the Palestinian people.

**You can watch the Return Flotilla [here](#)**



▪ **Tour with Balqis family from al Kabri**

Zochrot held an extraordinary tour with the Balqis family descendants of refugees from Al-Kabri. In the [video](#) Emad's mom who was expelled during Nakba describes where the cemetery is and how it looked and what did people use its white soil for.

During our tour, some Israeli residents of the area from the past and present also participated. Lily Ilan, one of the participants, wrote to Emad Balqis and all of us following their meeting:

Hi dear friends,

I just wanted to say that for me meeting the family of a refugee from al Kabri has profound meaning. Since I was 16-17 living here in the western Galilee and after reading Bab al Shams by Elias Khuri, I was caught in trying to reconstruct and figure out the hidden map of pre 1948 Galilee and discovering a hidden geography and history around me. Finding out about the Palestinian Kabri, kuwaykat, Amqa and the rest, was a moment that changed the way I looked at everything around me. I remember one morning, probably when I was 17, on the bus to high school (in Kibbutz Kabri), looking at the junction around me and realizing that even the trees around me have different names, that the landscape itself bears witness to a recent history which was (almost) completely erased.

Since then and with these thoughts and other7, I refused to get recruited to the IDF for conscientious reasons, went to university through my BA in Jerusalem and MA in Oxford, trying to figure out the history of this place, which I have learnt, many people call Palestine, and call home.. I went on to do a PhD about the social history of the western Galilee, and as I might have told you, Imad, just wrote an article about Kabri and what is now called the "Kabri Junction" during 1948 and the years following it.



You probably asked yourself what does this Israeli girl has to do with our beloved Kabri? For me, there is a personal quest here trying to write a history that can address the painful Palestinian history of the Nakba and its following catastrophes of confiscation and loss, together with the other history-ours, of Jewish settlement here. It is not a history of "two sides" that pushes aside tragedy, pain and responsibility but one that addresses the social and political reality of people who lived here, on this land.

Anyway, I just wanted to reach out to the Balqis family-saying thank you for your generosity and gentleness. I can't imagine how difficult this might have been, and allowing us all on this intimate journey is I think, very special. Listening to your mother, Imad, talk and watch her old destroyed village, was beyond touching. It was so painful and incredible at the same time. I feel honored.

Thank you Umar for guiding the tour and Amal for allowing this meeting to happen, and thank you my dear friend Irit and your parents for the graceful hospitality.

Much love,

Lily

▪ **Action and tour to expose the Palestinian destroyed villages in JNF sites**

The ruins of hundreds of Palestinian villages' communities are hidden in the JNF's forests and parks around the country. These sites do not mention the names of the destroyed villages or the Palestinian history of these places. By omitting those names, they are taking an active part in the erasure and denial of the Palestinian existence that began with the Nakba in 1948, and serve as a tool for shaping a false consciousness of the public. The signs on these sites do not mention the names of the destroyed villages or the Palestinian history of the place. Zochrot's action and tour to expose the Palestinian destroyed villages erased on JNF sites took place in September 2019. The event was held on Saturday, September 7, 2019, and included up to six parks and forests in the Modiin, Jerusalem and Beit Shemesh areas: Ben Shemen Forest, Rabin Park, British Park, Begin Park and USA Independence Park. More than 40 people participated in the Tour. We visited a number of sites of the JNF, learned the names of the villages hidden within them and placed signs containing the relevant information about each village.







## Communication and Social Media

Zochrot's website and app continue to serve as the largest and most accessible online source devoted to the Nakba. It is the only resource available in Hebrew and one of the leading ones in Arabic and English.

This year we have had 96,411 unique users visiting our website, 50% are from Israel, 10% from Palestine 10% from the US and the rest are from different locations: Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, UK, Germany etc. The overall percentage of Israelis using the website in the past 3 years is 58%, or around 212,622 Israelis. In the past year, over 45,000 Israelis visited the website.

More than 50,000 people from all over the world have downloaded the iNakba app since its launch in 2014, and in 2019 alone we had 5,344 active users, about 2,000 App Village Followers (people who follow one village or another) and almost 600 people who shared images on the app.

The well-trafficked site and app have proven to be very beneficial tools for reaching new audiences, including those interested in learning but reluctant to join activities. Both tools also contain a large image gallery depicting Palestinian life before 1948 and during the Nakba.

In addition to our website and app, we have been investing more efforts to expose our work and promote our vision through our social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This is briefly what we have improved this year:

**1- Expose our work and make the information more reachable:** We have built an annual calendar for the destroyed localities which enables us to spread more information and testimonies about the destroyed localities on the day they were depopulated and destroyed. The visuals, quotes and information we have been publishing have been quite efficient in drawing the attention of many people and increasing our reach and engagement percentage, specifically on Facebook. This has also impacted our website visits and increased it, as we use every post to direct people to learn more through the resources and materials we have on our website.

**2- We expressed our views and promoted our vision locally and internationally:** We were more engaged in the local and international political discourse and expressed our views. We designed many social media posters in which we expressed the importance of our acknowledgment, accountability and responsibility by relating to political events and developments, publishing relevant quotes by politicians, academics and other influencers that reaffirm our stand and messages, in addition to celebrating and highlighting small victories and return experiences. The main platform we used to be more politically engaged was Twitter, thus increasing our engagement and visibility there. We have also launched a Twitter storm as part of our campaign to call people to sing for return rather than sing on destroyed localities pre the Eurovision contest which was held in Tel Aviv at the time.

**3- Documenting and sharing our activities and events:** We have dedicated more time and attention to the documentation of our tours, action activities, lectures, talks, exhibitions and screenings for better media use. The statements and updates we have been publishing following our activities and events, accompanied by videos and photos, have increased our Instagram followers, Facebook reach and engagement, and visibility. The continuous use of visuals on our website and social media platforms have contributed to our google ranking and the increased number of people using Zochrot as a resource using backlinks has increased our rank on the google search engine.

It is quite important to note that many activities are pre designed to lead to media splash starting with the topic we are tackling, the choice of location, the kind of activity and the day we choose to hold the activity as long as they are inline directly with our goals and objectives. For example, the ReturnVision campaign we held in protest of the Eurovision contest being held on the destroyed Palestinian land of al-Shaykh Muwannis. The first action we took to launch the



campaign, was a tour to al-Shaykh Muwannis on 30/3 Land day, the occupation date of al-Shaykh Muwannis and the 1 year anniversary for the great return march in Gaza. This activity and many others have influenced the public opinion and the narrative and discourse used by many activists and solidarity groups who ended up using the same arguments and language we have used. The social media coverage we did pre and post this and other activities have drawn the attention of many journalists and media channels to cover the following activities and maintain a relationship with us as they look forward to future activities and events we will be holding. We see more interest and applications from internationals and Israeli students and activists to volunteer with us and we have been receiving many letters of appreciation and comments congratulating us for our efforts and work.

At last, our communication and social media tools are here to support the work we do and the vision we wish to promote and inspire more people to join. Hence, we always make sure that we are using a language and messages that bring back hope and inspire people to take responsibility for a better future for all. Despite the fact that a great part of our work sheds light on the past, we are determined to motivate people to act and see the past as an opportunity to look into the possibilities of the future of Return.

### **Media coverage of Zochrot:**

During 2019 we see an increase by 13% in the number of article, reviews and reports on Zochrot and the issue of the Nakba and the return of Palestinian refugees in compare to last year with a total number of 818 articles published during 2019. Here are some selected articles:

#### **In English:**

1. ["On Eurovision final day, Israelis cheer as Palestinians protest", Reuters](#)
2. ["Eurovision goes ahead in Israel despite pro-Palestinian protests", alJazeera](#)
3. [Israeli Art Student Creates Online Archive of Looted Palestinian Objects From War of Independence, Haaretz](#)
4. [The Palestine Brief: Demolitions in Negev and the forgotten plight of Palestinian Bedouins, The New Arab](#)
5. [Whatever Happened to the Israeli Left? On the eve of the Jewish state's elections, an appraisal of the battered opposition, Mymag](#)

#### **In Hebrew:**

1. Haaretz – [Coverage of the Return Rally](#)
2. Haaretz – [Zochrot's member op-ed advocating return](#)
3. Haaretz – [Zochrot's Umar al-Ghubari's op-ed "Imagining return"](#)
4. Haaretz – [Editorial: The Nakba will not disappear](#)
5. Haaretz – [Female Palestinian film-makers in 48mm film festival](#)
6. Channel 20 – [Banned US congresswomen were scheduled to meet with Zochrot](#)
7. Haaretz – Op-ed: [Who is afraid of the Nakba?](#)
8. Local Call – [Guide to protesting the Eurovision](#)
9. Local Call – [The Return Flotilla](#)
10. Haaretz - Exhibition review: [Image of an infiltrator](#)
11. Kol Hair – [Art or provocation? 48mm film festival in Jerusalem](#)
12. Walla – [Thousands commemorated the Nakba on independence day](#)
13. Walla – [Short films on the right to return, 48mm film festival returns](#)