

Records of Dispossession



RECORDS OF DISPOSSESSION

PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROPERTY AND THE
ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT MICHAEL R. FISCHBACH

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No issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict has proven more intractable than the status of the Palestinian refugees. This work focuses on the controversial question of the property left behind by the refugees during the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. Beyond discussing the extent of the refugees' losses and detailing the methods by which Israel expropriated this property, the book also notes the ways that the property question has affected, and in turn been affected by, the wider Arab-Israeli conflict over the decades. It shows how the property question influenced Arab-Israeli diplomacy and discusses the implications of the fact that the question remains unresolved despite numerous diplomatic efforts. From late 1947 through 1948, more than 726,000 Palestinians -- over half the entire population -- were uprooted from their homes and villages. Though some middle class refugees were able to flee with liquid capital, the majority were small-scale farmers whose worldly fortunes were the land, livestock, and crops they left behind. This book tells for the first time the full story of how much property changed hands, what it was worth, and how it was used by the fledgling state of Israel. It then traces the subsequent decades of diplomatic activity on the issue and publishes previously secret UN estimates of the scope and value of the refugee property. Michael Fischbach offers a detailed study of Israeli counterclaims for Jewish property lost in the Arab world, diplomatic schemes for resolving the conflict, secret compensation efforts, and the renewed diplomatic efforts on behalf of property claims since the onset of Arab-Israeli peace talks. Based largely on archival records, including those of the United Nations Conciliation Commission of Palestine, never before available to the public and kept under lock and key in the UN archives, *Records of Dispossession* is the first detailed historical examination of the Palestinian refugee property question.

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