

Book Review: Shelly L. Fried, "They are not coming back": the crystallization of Israeli foreign policy toward possible solutions of the Palestinian refugee problem, 1947-1956: from the UN partition resolution to the Suez campaign

They Shall Not Return, The Day After: Israel, the Palestinian Refugees and the "Abandoned Property"

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The making of the Palestinian refugee problem is among the most debated topics in the historiography of the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict. The work of the late scholar Dr. Shelly Fried has concentrated on one aspect of the making of the refugee problem: the Israeli policy intended to block the return of Palestinian war refugees. His comprehensive and compelling PhD thesis, submitted in 2003, was among the first to deal with the Israeli policy regarding the return of refugees during the formative years of Israeli statehood, between 1948 and 1956. A shortened version of the thesis was recently published as a book, concentrating on the first two crucial years, from the outbreak of the 1948 war to the end of the UN-sponsored Lausanne conference in October 1949. Our critical article attempts to analyze the political process presented in this book by examining the historical-geographical aspect of the non-return policy adopted by the Israeli government as early as June 1948. It expands on the formation of a land policy aimed at the transfer of former Arab land property into Jewish hands, which resulted in an overwhelming postwar spatial transformation of former Arab areas.