

ABDALLAH TARABIEH

SOUNDS OF LOSS AND MISFORTUNE RINGS OUT FROM THE
NDALUSIAN POEMS OF LAMENTATIONS- " *Journal of Oriental an African
Studies (JOAS)*. Vol. 30, p.p 229-251.

Abstract

This study is concerned with the persecution, massacres, and forced conversions that occurred in Andalusia and are known in Arabic as the Nakba (the great misfortune). This is a weighty Arabic term that was first used by period historians and poets whose works documented the events in great detail. Modern scholarship in Arabic uses the term 'Nakba' to refer to three historical events in which both Muslim and Jews were involved: the Andalusian Nakba, the Holocaust, and the Palestinian Nakba.

Although there are great similarities between what the Muslims and Jews experienced in medieval Andalusia and the Holocaust of the Jews in 20th century Europe, it is clear that these calamities differ in the scope of death, their mode of conduct, and their motivation². Notably, in contrast to the first two calamities, the Palestinian Nakba was not driven by religious motivation.

Yet all three calamities resulted in the uprooting of entire communities, who were forced *en masse* to abandon their homes and flee their former homes as refugees.

Below I argue that the details encapsulated in poems of grief and lamentation should leave no doubt why these events are referred to as a Nakba.

Originally a poetic division within the genre devoted to the Lamentation for the Cities, the Poetry of Wailing developed into an independent subgenre, noted for its attention to the historical record and its attempt to document the spirit of the age. The Poetry of Wailing flourished during the protracted Muslims defeat in Andalusia; as the Christian forces continually progressed, the dimensions of the torture to which local Muslim and Jewish populations were subjected increased in proportion.

The destruction of the cities, and the deliberate murder of their inhabitants, were events that directly influenced the poetic form of the lamentations and are reflected in their tones and images. The connotation of destruction and utter annihilation that accompany the term Nakba which was coined at this time – was an attempt to cry out to the Arab princes to awaken from their slumber, and enlist in the effort to salvage Arab homeland in the West. In Andalusian lamentations written in Hebrew, a similar form of wailing can be identified, expressing the suffering of the exiled Jews, who appealed to God for salvation, both physical and spiritual. Yet both Jews and Muslims were given little choice and had to decide between death and conversion.