

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited

The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited is a topic that continues to resonate deeply in discussions about Middle Eastern history and geopolitics. It's a complex and often emotional subject that traces back to the mid-20th century, when a series of events led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Understanding how this refugee crisis came to be requires diving into historical contexts, political decisions, and the human consequences that followed. Let's explore this topic with a fresh perspective, shedding light on the origins, key moments, and lasting impact of the Palestinian refugee problem.

The Historical Context: Roots of a Crisis

Before the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem took shape, the land known as Palestine was a diverse and multiethnic region under Ottoman rule until the early 20th century. Following World War I, the British Mandate period began, bringing significant demographic and political changes. The mandate era saw increasing Jewish immigration fueled by Zionist aspirations for a Jewish homeland, alongside growing Arab nationalism and resistance.

The British Mandate and Rising Tensions

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, where Britain expressed support for a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine, set the stage for future conflict. Jewish immigration increased, leading to tensions between the Jewish communities and the indigenous Arab population. Land purchases by Zionist organizations, coupled with economic disparities, heightened fears and resentment among Palestinians. This volatile environment laid the groundwork for the eventual crisis.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War: A Pivotal Moment

The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem was dramatically accelerated by the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, sometimes called the Nakba, or “catastrophe” by Palestinians. This conflict erupted after the United Nations proposed partitioning Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. The plan was rejected by Arab leaders, leading to armed conflict following Israel's declaration of independence.

Mass Displacement and Refugee Exodus

During the conflict, approximately 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. The reasons for this mass exodus remain debated among historians, with some emphasizing voluntary flight due to fear of war, while others point to forced expulsions and systematic violence. The displacement created an unprecedented refugee population that sought shelter in neighboring countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and the Gaza Strip.

Life in Refugee Camps

The immediate aftermath saw refugees living in makeshift camps under harsh conditions. Over time, these camps became semi-permanent communities, often lacking adequate infrastructure, employment opportunities, and political rights. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to provide assistance, but the underlying issues of displacement and statelessness persisted.

Key Factors Behind the Refugee Problem

It's important to revisit the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem by examining the multiple factors that contributed to its emergence and endurance.

Political Decisions and International Involvement

The international community's role, particularly that of Britain, the United Nations, and early Israeli leadership, was pivotal. The partition plan's implementation, lack of clear protections for Palestinian residents, and the absence of a coordinated response to the refugee crisis all contributed to the problem's escalation. Additionally, the Arab states' military interventions and subsequent political dynamics complicated efforts toward resolution.

Military Strategies and Population Movements

Military tactics during the 1948 war often involved clearing strategic areas of Palestinian inhabitants to secure supply lines and territorial control. While some expulsions were strategic, others were chaotic results of war. The psychological impact of violence and rumors also led many Palestinians to flee preemptively, fearing for their safety.

Socioeconomic Displacement

The loss of land and livelihoods was a critical factor. Many Palestinians were farmers, merchants, and artisans deeply rooted in their communities. Displacement severed these economic ties, plunging refugees into poverty and dependency, which further entrenched the refugee crisis.

Revisiting Narratives: Perspectives on the Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem

Understanding this issue means acknowledging the diverse narratives that surround it. Israeli, Palestinian, and international accounts often differ in interpretation and emphasis.

Palestinian Narrative

For Palestinians, the refugee crisis is a story of dispossession and loss, a collective trauma that shapes identity and claims for justice and return. The Nakba is commemorated annually as a painful reminder of their uprootedness and ongoing struggle for rights.

Israeli Narrative

From the Israeli perspective, the 1948 war was a fight for survival and independence against hostile neighbors. Many Israelis view the refugee exodus as a tragic but inevitable consequence of war, sometimes emphasizing Arab leaders' calls to flee or the refusal to accept peace plans.

Academic and International Views

Scholars have tried to piece together a balanced understanding, drawing on archival research, testimonies, and geopolitical analysis. International law debates and United Nations resolutions, such as UN Resolution 194 affirming the right of return for Palestinian refugees, highlight the ongoing complexity.

The Lasting Impact and Contemporary Relevance

The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem is not just a historical event; it continues to influence politics,

humanitarian efforts, and peace negotiations today.

Generational Refugee Communities

What began as an emergency displacement has transformed into a protracted refugee situation, with multiple generations living in camps or diaspora communities worldwide. Issues of citizenship, right of return, and integration remain unresolved, fueling tensions.

Peace Process and Negotiations

The refugee question remains one of the central sticking points in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Proposals have ranged from compensation and resettlement options to full recognition of the right of return, but no consensus has been reached.

Humanitarian and Development Challenges

Refugee camps often suffer from overcrowding, unemployment, and limited access to services, making humanitarian assistance crucial. International organizations continue to work toward improving living conditions while advocating for political solutions.

Reflecting on the Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited

Revisiting the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem encourages a deeper appreciation of the human stories behind historical events. It invites empathy and a nuanced understanding that goes beyond political rhetoric. Recognizing the complexity and the multiple perspectives involved can help foster dialogue and, hopefully, pave the way for a more just and lasting resolution. The Palestinian refugee problem is not just a relic of the past but a living issue demanding attention, compassion, and thoughtful engagement from the global community.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main focus of 'The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited'?

The book critically examines the origins and development of the Palestinian refugee crisis during the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, challenging prevailing narratives about the causes and responsibilities.

Who is the author of 'The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited'?

The book was written by Benny Morris, a prominent Israeli historian known for his research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

How does Benny Morris's work challenge previous accounts of the Palestinian refugee problem?

Morris uses newly declassified Israeli archives to reveal that the displacement of Palestinians was not solely a result of Arab actions or voluntary flight, but also involved expulsions and military operations by Jewish forces.

Why is 'The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited' considered significant in Middle Eastern studies?

It provides a comprehensive and nuanced historical analysis based on primary sources, reshaping scholarly and public understanding of the 1948 refugee crisis and its lasting impact.

What impact did 'The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited' have on Israeli and Palestinian narratives?

The book sparked controversy by undermining traditional Israeli narratives of the conflict, leading to debates about historical accountability and the moral implications of the 1948 war.

Are there criticisms of Morris's interpretation in 'The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited'?

Yes, some scholars argue that Morris's work still reflects certain biases and that his interpretations of the archives may underplay Israeli responsibility or the broader context of the conflict.

Additional Resources

****The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited****

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited invites a critical reassessment of one of the most enduring and contentious issues in Middle Eastern history. Originating in the mid-20th century, the Palestinian refugee crisis remains a deeply complex humanitarian and political challenge that continues to influence regional dynamics and international relations. Revisiting its origins is crucial to understanding the layers of displacement, identity, and geopolitical struggles that define the Palestinian refugee experience today.

Historical Context and Origins

The roots of the Palestinian refugee problem trace back primarily to the tumultuous period surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, an event Palestinians refer to as the Nakba, or "catastrophe." The aftermath of the British Mandate for Palestine and the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947 set the stage for escalating tensions between Jewish and Arab populations in the region.

As conflict erupted, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes, becoming refugees almost overnight. Estimates suggest that approximately 700,000 Palestinians were displaced during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. These refugees sought shelter in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which were then under Jordanian and Egyptian control, respectively.

Key Factors Contributing to Displacement

Several intertwined factors contributed to the large-scale displacement of Palestinians:

- **Military hostilities and violence:** The 1947-1949 war involved multiple battles and sieges that forced civilians to flee for safety.
- **Expulsion policies and fear:** Certain Zionist paramilitary groups implemented policies that led to the forced removal of Palestinian communities, while widespread fear of violence incited voluntary flight.
- **Breakdown of social order:** The collapse of mandatory governance and the subsequent chaos resulted in disrupted communities and mass migration.

These elements combined to create a refugee population that was not only displaced geographically but also fractured socially and politically.

The Demographic and Political Implications

The emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem had profound demographic consequences for the region. Entire villages were depopulated, and the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs in Palestine shifted dramatically. The refugee crisis also became a central political issue, influencing Arab-Israeli relations and fueling decades of conflict.

Refugee Status and Legal Recognition

One of the defining features of the Palestinian refugee problem is the legal and political status accorded to displaced Palestinians. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), established in 1949, is unique as a dedicated international agency addressing the needs of a specific refugee population.

Unlike other refugee crises managed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNRWA continues to provide education, healthcare, and social services to multiple generations of Palestinian refugees, many of whom remain stateless. This ongoing refugee status perpetuates a sense of impermanence and uncertainty among Palestinians, distinguishing their plight from many other displaced peoples worldwide.

Comparative Perspectives

When compared to other refugee crises globally, the Palestinian refugee problem is marked by its longevity and political entanglement. For instance, while many refugees worldwide eventually integrate into host countries or repatriate, Palestinian refugees often face legal restrictions preventing full citizenship in many Arab states. This perpetuates socio-economic marginalization and complicates efforts toward durable solutions.

Furthermore, the Palestinian refugee issue remains central to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way few other refugee situations are connected to ongoing territorial disputes. The "right of return," a principle advocated by Palestinians seeking to reclaim their ancestral homes, remains a highly contentious topic in peace negotiations.

Socioeconomic and Humanitarian Dimensions

The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem revisited also entails examining the humanitarian aftermath that has persisted for over seven decades. Refugee camps established hastily in the late 1940s have evolved into densely populated urban enclaves characterized by poverty, limited infrastructure, and restricted economic opportunities.

Living Conditions in Refugee Camps

Many Palestinian refugees live in camps across Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories, where overcrowding and inadequate public services persist. These camps often lack sufficient access to clean water, electricity, and healthcare, exacerbating the vulnerability of their populations.

Additionally, refugee populations face high unemployment rates and limited prospects for upward mobility, factors that fuel frustration and political radicalization in some cases. The dependence on international aid contributes to a cycle of dependency that hinders sustainable development.

Impact on Host Countries

The presence of large Palestinian refugee populations has significantly impacted host countries both socially and politically. While nations like Jordan have granted citizenship to many Palestinian refugees, integrating them into society, others like Lebanon and Syria have imposed strict limitations on refugees' rights, affecting employment and property ownership.

This uneven treatment influences regional politics and inter-communal relations, occasionally leading to tensions between refugees and host communities. The Palestinian refugee problem thus extends beyond humanitarian concerns, affecting national policies and stability in the Middle East.

Revisiting Narratives and Historical Interpretations

A comprehensive revisit of the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem requires acknowledging the diverse and often conflicting narratives that shape its understanding.

Palestinian Perspective

From the Palestinian viewpoint, the refugee problem is a direct result of dispossession and forced exile. The Nakba symbolizes not just physical displacement but a rupture in national identity and historical continuity. Palestinian leadership and communities emphasize the right of return as an inalienable and central component of any just resolution.

Israeli Perspective

Conversely, many Israeli narratives frame the refugee crisis within the context of a war initiated by Arab states rejecting the UN partition plan and seeking to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state. Israeli accounts often highlight instances of Arab leadership encouraging evacuation or portray Palestinian flight as a consequence of broader conflict rather than systematic expulsion.

International and Academic Approaches

Scholars and international observers have sought to analyze the refugee problem through multidisciplinary lenses, including legal studies, history, sociology, and political science. Recent historiographical trends emphasize a nuanced understanding that goes beyond binary narratives, recognizing the roles of multiple actors and complex circumstances that led to displacement.

This reexamination challenges entrenched positions and opens space for dialogue informed by evidence, empathy, and a commitment to resolving protracted displacement.

Contemporary Relevance and Continuing Challenges

The birth of the Palestinian refugee problem revisited is not solely a historical exercise; it informs ongoing debates over peace processes, refugee rights, and regional security. As peace negotiations have stalled over the years, the refugee question remains a core sticking point.

International bodies, including the United Nations and various NGOs, continue to call attention to the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees while advocating for political solutions that respect human rights and international law. Any long-term resolution will require addressing the historical grievances rooted in the events of 1948 and subsequent decades.

Prospects for Resolution

Potential pathways for resolving aspects of the Palestinian refugee crisis include:

1. **Right of Return or Compensation:** Negotiations might explore options for refugees to return, receive compensation, or resettle with dignity.
2. **Improved Integration in Host Countries:** Enhancing the legal and socio-economic status of refugees in host states could alleviate hardship.
3. **International Support and Development:** Sustained funding and programs aimed at education, infrastructure, and economic empowerment.

However, political complexities, competing national interests, and deep-seated mistrust pose significant obstacles to these approaches.

Revisiting the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem underscores that its resolution demands a holistic understanding of history, human suffering, and the geopolitical realities of the Middle East. Only through informed dialogue and genuine commitment to justice can progress be envisioned for millions of displaced Palestinians and the broader region.

[The Birth Of The Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited](#)

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* Benny Morris, 2004 This book explores the realities behind the Palestinian exodus of 1948 during the Arab-Israeli war.

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited Benny Morris, 2004-01-05 Benny Morris' *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* was published in 1988. Its startling revelations about how and why 700,000 Palestinians left their homes and became refugees during the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 undermined traditional interpretations as to whether they left voluntarily or were expelled as part of a systematic plan. This book represents a revised edition of the earlier work, compiled on the basis of newly-opened Israeli military archives. While the focus remains the 1948 war and the analysis of the Palestinian exodus, the new material contains more information about what happened in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Haifa, and how events there led to the collapse of Palestinian urban society. It also sheds light on the battles and atrocities that resulted in the disintegration of rural communities. The story is a harrowing one. The refugees now number four million and their existence remains a major obstacle to peace.

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949 Benny Morris, 1989-02-24 This book is the first full-length study of the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem. Based on recently declassified Israeli, British and American state and party political papers and on hitherto untapped private papers, it traces the stages of the 1947-9 exodus against the backdrop of the first Arab-Israeli war and analyses the varied causes of the flight. The Jewish and Arab decision-making involved, on national and local levels, military and political, is described and explained, as is the crystallisation of Israel's decision to bar a refugee repatriation. The subsequent fate of the abandoned Arab villages, lands and urban

neighbourhoods is examined. The study looks at the international context of the war and the exodus, and describes the political battle over the refugees' fate, which effectively ended with the deadlock at Lausanne in summer 1949. Throughout the book attempts to describe what happened rather than what successive generations of Israeli and Arab propagandists have said happened, and to explain the motives of the protagonists.

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: The Discourse of Palestinian-Israeli Relations Sean F. McMahon, 2010-04-15 This Foucault-inspired analysis of the degeneration of the Oslo Process into direct Palestinian-Israeli violence critically examines the ideas and practices that define Palestinian-Israeli relations. The text offers a radically different peace proposal that moves far beyond exhausted calls for confidence-building measures and/or an end to settlement construction.

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: *The Impossibility of Palestine* Mehran Kamrava, 2016-04-26 The “two-state solution” is the official policy of Israel, the United States, the United Nations, and the Palestinian Authority alike. However, international relations scholar Mehran Kamrava argues that Israel’s “state-building” process has never risen above the level of municipal governance, and its goal has never been Palestinian independence. He explains that a coherent Palestinian state has already been rendered an impossibility, and to move forward, Palestine must redefine its present predicament and future aspirations. Based on detailed fieldwork, exhaustive scholarship, and an in-depth examination of historical sources, this controversial work will be widely read and debated by all sides.

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the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: *The Colonizing Self* Hagar Kotef, 2020-11-02 Colonizers continuously transform spaces of violence into spaces of home. Israeli Jews settle in the West Bank and in depopulated Palestinian houses in Haifa or Jaffa. White missionaries build their lives in Africa. The descendants of European settlers in the Americas and Australia dwell and thrive on expropriated indigenous lands. In *The Colonizing Self* Hagar Kotef traces the cultural, political, and spatial apparatuses that enable people and nations to settle on the ruins of other people's homes. Kotef demonstrates how the mass and structural modes of violence that are necessary for the establishment and sustainment of the colony dwell within settler-colonial homemaking, and through it shape collective and individual identities. She thus powerfully shows how the possibility to live amid the destruction one generates is not merely the possibility to turn one's gaze away from violence but also the possibility to develop an attachment to violence itself.

Kotef thereby offers a theoretical framework for understanding how settler-colonial violence becomes inseparable from one's sense of self.

the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: Targeting Civilians in War

Alexander B. Downes, 2011-05-15 Accidental harm to civilians in warfare often becomes an occasion for public outrage, from citizens of both the victimized and the victimizing nation. In this vitally important book on a topic of acute concern for anyone interested in military strategy, international security, or human rights, Alexander B. Downes reminds readers that democratic and authoritarian governments alike will sometimes deliberately kill large numbers of civilians as a matter of military strategy. What leads governments to make such a choice? Downes examines several historical cases: British counterinsurgency tactics during the Boer War, the starvation blockade used by the Allies against Germany in World War I, Axis and Allied bombing campaigns in World War II, and ethnic cleansing in the Palestine War. He concludes that governments decide to target civilian populations for two main reasons—desperation to reduce their own military casualties or avert defeat, or a desire to seize and annex enemy territory. When a state's military fortunes take a turn for the worse, he finds, civilians are more likely to be declared legitimate targets to coerce the enemy state to give up. When territorial conquest and annexation are the aims of warfare, the population of the disputed land is viewed as a threat and the aggressor state may target those civilians to remove them. Democracies historically have proven especially likely to target civilians in desperate circumstances. In *Targeting Civilians in War*, Downes explores several major recent conflicts, including the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Civilian casualties occurred in each campaign, but they were not the aim of military action. In these cases, Downes maintains, the achievement of quick and decisive victories against overmatched foes allowed democracies to win without abandoning their normative beliefs by intentionally targeting civilians. Whether such restraint can be guaranteed in future conflicts against more powerful adversaries is, however, uncertain. During times of war, democratic societies suffer tension between norms of humane conduct and pressures to win at the lowest possible costs. The painful lesson of *Targeting Civilians in War* is that when these two concerns clash, the latter usually prevails.

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2017-11-07 “Comprehensive and compelling...a landmark study” of the Arab-Zionist conflict, told from both sides, by the author of *Israel's Secret Wars* (Sunday Times, UK). Setting the scene at the end of the nineteenth century, when the first Zionist settlers arrived in the Ottoman-ruled Holy Land, Black draws on a wide range of sources—from declassified documents to oral testimonies to his own vivid-on-the-ground reporting—to illuminate the most polarizing conflict of modern times. Beginning with the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which the British government promised to favor the establishment of “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine, Black proceeds through the Arab Rebellion of the late 1930s, the Nazi Holocaust, Israel's independence and the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe), the watershed of 1967 followed by the Palestinian re-awakening, Israel's settlement project, two Intifadas, the Oslo Accords, and continued negotiations and violence up to today. Combining engaging narrative with political analysis and social and cultural insights, *Enemies and Neighbors* is both an accessible overview and a fascinating investigation into the deeper truths of a furiously contested history.

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Volume 2, Contemporary Perspectives Allen D. Hertzke, Timothy Samuel Shah, 2016-02-15

Volume 2 of *Christianity and Freedom* illuminates how Christian minorities and transnational Christian networks contribute to the freedom and flourishing of societies across the globe, even amidst pressure and violent persecution. Featuring unprecedented field research by some of the world's most distinguished scholars, it documents the outsized role of Christians in promoting human rights and religious freedom; fighting injustice; stimulating economic equality; providing education, social services, and health care; and nurturing democratic civil society. Readers will come away surprised and sobered to learn how this very Christian link to freedom often invites persecution. What are the dimensions of persecution and how are Christians responding to that

pressure? What resources - theological, social, or transnational - do they marshal in leavening their societies? What will be lost if the Christian presence is marginalized? The answers to these questions are of crucial relevance in a world awash with religious extremism and deepening instability.

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the birth of the palestinian refugee problem revisited: Mythologies Without End Jerome Slater, 2020 The history of modern Israel is a fiercely contested subject. From the Balfour declaration to the Six-Day War to the recent assault on Gaza, ideologically-charged narratives and counter-narratives battle for dominance not just in Israel itself but throughout the world. In the United States and Israel, the Israeli cause is treated as the more righteous one, albeit with important qualifiers and caveats. In *Mythologies Without End*, Jerome Slater, a senior scholar on the conflict and a perceptive critic of Israel, takes stock of the conflict over time and argues that US policies in the region are largely a product of mythologies that are often flatly wrong. Because of their widespread acceptance, there have been devastating consequences to the true interests of both countries. However, the historical truth is very nearly the converse: it is Israel and the US that have repeatedly lost, discarded, or even deliberately sabotaged many opportunities to reach fair compromise settlements of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. As Slater reexamines the entire history of the conflict from its onset at the end of WWI through today, he argues that a refutation of the many mythologies is a necessary first step toward solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Focusing on US role in the conflict, this book exposes the self-defeating policies of both the US and Israel, which have served to prolong the conflict far beyond when it should have been resolved.

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more powerful sister movement Hamas.

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readers understand the complexities and contradictions of the conflict and why the histories of Palestine and Israel are so fiercely contested. Now in its second edition, this book has been thoroughly updated to reflect the events that have transpired since its original publication. Fresh insights consider the impact of current global and regional instability and violence on the prospects of peace and reconciliation. New discussions address recent debates over two-state versus one-state solutions, growing polarization in public discourse outside of the Middle East, the role of public intellectuals, and the growing trend of merging scholarship with advocacy. Part of the Wiley-Blackwell Contested Histories series, this clear and accessible volume: Offers a balanced, non-polemic approach to current academic discussions and political debates on the Israel-Palestine conflict Highlights eleven core arguments viewed by the author as unwinnable Encourages readers to go beyond simply assigning blame in the conflict Explores the major historiographical debates arising from the dispute Includes updated references and additional maps Already a standard text for courses on the history and politics of the Middle East, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict* is an indispensable resource for students, scholars, and interested general readers.

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