



**Book Review — *Catastrophe: Nakba II*, by Fintan Drury.**

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In *Catastrophe: Nakba II*, Fintan Drury presents a text urgently rooted in historical witnessing. Framed by the events of the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 and Israel’s subsequent military campaign in Gaza, the book treats these developments as part of a continuum of dispossession, which stretches back nearly eight decades to the first Nakba of 1947–1949, when 750,000 Palestinians were displaced during the founding of the state of Israel. In so doing, Drury offers not only a blistering critique of Israeli and Western complicity, but also a re-contextualisation of the present as a second catastrophe, or second Nakba, one unfolding before our eyes in ways even more devastating than the past.

Drury writes soberly and in an emotionally engaging manner. With careful restraint, he assembles a set of unsensational yet powerful facts. This measured approach enhances the book’s authenticity which is seldom found in polemics. Unsatisfied to overwhelm the reader with abstract outrage, Drury allows testimonies, data and historical parallels to speak for themselves. Drury writes as both journalist and moral witness, a combination that enables him to patch together historical detail while maintaining a voice that is direct and unflinching. The result is a reading that resists any comfortable resolution of its own harsh truths: suffering is systemic among Palestinians; the violence of October 7<sup>th</sup> has roots deeper than the immediate event; and in this instance, the states that claim to advocate for human rights have facilitated their erosion.

The book opens with ‘One Day, One Attack’, a chapter that anchors the reader in the shock of 7 October 2023. Yet Drury will not leave that day suspended in the empty ether. He interacts directly with reality and frames the assault as a predictable outcome of a systemic oppression. Historical perspective, he suggests, is not something that can be brushed aside in times of paroxysmal crisis. The beginning of *Catastrophe: Nakba II* burns itself

into memory: “Today, we are witnessing a second Nakba—one being played out in front of our eyes” (as stated in the publisher’s summary). It does not echo history; rather, it pulses—alive, urgent, unstoppable. With that line, Drury breaks whatever complacency the audience may have harboured, daring them to confront the brutal continuity of dispossession.

The next chapter, ‘Israel 2023’, situates the discussion within the political realities of Netanyahu’s government and the rightward drift of Israel, where expansionist policies and settler-colonial aspirations have deepened the vulnerability of Palestinian life. Drury’s main argument is that what followed the 7 October attacks, the Israeli military response and the mass dislocation of Gazans, amounts to a second Nakba. It is an intentional parallel to 1948: both moments have driven hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes and threatened the erasure of their history. The catastrophe of 1948 never actually ‘ended’ but rather transformed and came back with far greater might. The catastrophe of 1948, he contends, merely changed forms and resurfaced with renewed vigour in the twenty-first century.

The middle chapters provide a detailed exploration of the mechanisms that sustain Palestinian dispossession. ‘Oppression’ and ‘Erasing the Past’ reveal the structural logic behind Zionism’s territorial project. Drury argues that land control has always been intricately tied to controlling history. By erasing the world’s memory of Palestinians—whether by destroying villages, disseminating counter-narratives, or delegitimising Palestinian identity more broadly—Israel solidifies the ideological groundwork for its continued expansion.

The chapter on ‘United Nations Relief Works Agency’ is especially telling. Drury shows how, for some time, the agency has worked as a band-aid for a problem the international community refuses to solve. Most recently, Drury has scrutinised United Nations Relief Works Agency’s (UNRWA) standing, which has sustained not only Israeli hostility but also the withdrawal of Western support. For Drury, the weakening of the UNRWA is not mere coincidence, but symptomatic of a more profound condition: The West’s willingness to regard Palestinian misery as a manageable affair rather than an urgent one.

Perhaps one of the harshest chapters is ‘The West’s Asleep’. Here, Drury unleashes a barrage of criticism upon the U.S.A. and its allies, whom he

holds responsible for facilitating the Israeli campaign in Gaza by means of military support, diplomatic protection and rhetorical balance. In contrast, ordinary citizens across the globe, mobilising in massive demonstrations, have shown a moral urgency by refusing to accept the agendas of Western governments and rejecting their silence through protest. A critical gap exists between public outrage and political inertia, underlining one of Drury's recurring points: silence and consent are forms of violence too.

The penultimate chapter, entitled 'One Year On', acts as both a reflection and an indictment. Drury takes stock of the first year post-7 October, documenting the extent of destruction in Gaza, the breakdown of diplomacy in international institutions and worsening humanitarian crises.

What distinguishes *Catastrophe: Nakba II* from other studies of the Israel-Palestine conflict is its readiness in drawing historical parallels, showing how today's mass displacements mirror the expulsions of 1948, and in affirming that the present crisis is not an isolated event but is instead the new form of an ongoing catastrophe. While some analysts, like those at the *New York Times*, were asked to avoid terms like genocide or Nakba due to controversy concerns, Drury insists that words must represent reality. To call the ongoing displacement anything less than a second catastrophe, as he argued, is to encourage and sustain denial.

Drury's book is not a light read, nor should it be. Rather, it is a necessary one. *Catastrophe: Nakba II* insists that we recognise the continuity of Palestinian suffering and the structures that sustain it. If one wants a reflective, historically rooted and uncompromising call to witness what is happening in Palestine today—not as breaking news but as part of a continuing disaster—then *Catastrophe: Nakba II* is that book. Drury's accomplishment lies in transforming journalism, with its purported objectivity, into the testimony of a witness. His book is not just about the Gaza Strip or West Bank, rather, it is about the act of witnessing. Reading *Catastrophe: Nakba II* challenges the violence of silence, forcing readers to recognise that neutrality is also a choice during catastrophic events.

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