

# Conference Report: Displacement, Forced Migration, and Reparation: Comparisons and Controversies

The workshop entitled: 'Displacement, Forced Migration and Reparation: Comparisons and Controversies' was held at the University of Sussex from 12–13 December 2024. It was organized by the Weidenfeld Institute in partnership with the Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights at the



Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Institute of Advanced Studies. This collaboration is part of an ongoing effort to foster critical discussions on the redress of historical injustices.

The workshop brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to examine reparations as a policy instrument for societies that have experienced violent uprooting and forced migration. Presentations explored different types of mass displacement – ranging from internal displacement and displacement caused by wars of aggression to climate-induced migration – scrutinizing the role of states and international organizations in responding to these human rights' violations. Discussions highlighted the urgent need for more comprehensive, evidence-based and comparative research on these issues, which are critical for reconciliation and maintaining peace during periods of transition.

A keynote address was delivered by **Megan Bradley** (McGill University) on 'Citizenship, Alienage, and Irreparable Loss.' Bradley

introduced the concept of 'just return', challenging the notion of simple 'solutions' to displacement. She emphasised the irreparable losses and long-term effects on individuals and communities, advocating for approaches that centre on the aspirations and agency of displaced persons.

The workshop faced challenges beyond the academic discussions. Local BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, a movement that advocates for economic sanctions, boycotts, and divestment against Israel) activists called for a boycott of the event and during the first session on *Palestinian Displacement* a loud demonstration took place outside the venue. Despite these disruptions, the event proceeded.

Such events underscore the importance of engaged scholarship in addressing historical injustices and contemporary crises of displacement. The discussions contribute to a broader, ongoing conversation about the role of reparations, human rights and transitional justice in shaping a more just and sustainable future.