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FOR NATIONAL POLICY RESEARCH

Home

Milestones in Shaping a Policy for the Return of Residents to their Homes at the End of the War

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Executive Summary

The State of Israel faces an unprecedented situation in its history following the horrific massacre of communities in the South on October 7th. Tens of thousands of residents were evacuated from their homes, initially from the Gaza Envelope area and later from the northern border. At the time of writing, three months after the outbreak of war, over 330,000 citizens remain evacuated from their homes, residing in temporary accommodations in hotels, guesthouses, hostels, and makeshift solutions.

The research group "Habayta" (Home) set itself a goal to examine and share academic expertise that deals with disaster area recovery, and to formulate a "return home" policy to be disseminated to the general public and decision-makers. This is based on the premise that academia, as an integral part of society, bears a responsibility for dialogue and collaboration in confronting social challenges. The research group that formed at the Samuel Neaman Institute includes researchers from a range of academic institutions, students, and Technion employees.

The unprecedented evacuation from entire regions raises questions about the return of the evacuees to their homes: When will it happen? Under what conditions? What physical, psychological, and community rehabilitation processes will the evacuees require before they feel a sense of "home" again? Will the long-awaited return represent an opportunity for a better future, or will it lead to a life of uncertainty and insecurity, as it was before?

This document focuses on the homecoming process from different perspectives. It ranges from theoretical definitions of concepts like disaster, rebuilding, and rehabilitation, to operational recommendations for optimal management of the homecoming process. Key concepts such as trauma, memory, community resilience, and the principle advocated by US President Joe Biden, "Build Back Better," are explored. This aspiration runs as a common thread throughout the chapters, stemming from an understanding that the residents will not return to the same reality that they left. In order for them to return, we must offer them a better world.

The first part introduces the subject and offers definitions of "post-conflict reconstruction," referencing relevant literature. It explores the concept of trauma, both personal and collective, and discusses the role of collective memory in shaping trauma, recovery, and risk.

The second part examines "community resilience" as a key concept in the reconstruction process and the ability to return home, not just physically, but as a thriving community.

The third part details principles and operational recommendations for the proper management of the homecoming process in all its facets and dimensions.