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WORLD ORGANIZATION OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES (WOJA

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Presently he is Director of the J.R. Elyachar Center for Studies in Sephardi Heritage at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva.

Among his publications are: "Some Aspects of Socialization in the Israeli Army," in Poll and Kraus, eds, *On Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Israel,* Bar-Ilan University Press; "Jewish-Arab Relations in Libya: Myths and Realities", a paper submitted to the Israel Academic Committee on the Middle East in cooperation with Columbia University Alumni Association; *Forces of Change in the Middle East* (Mass., 1971), which he edited; *From Immigrant to Citizen; The Contribution of the Army to National Integration in Israel* (The Hague: 1979).

Fourth printing

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH PRINTING

Two major events have occurred in the Arab Middle East since the third printing went to press in 1978: the Peace Treaty with Egypt and the Peace Treaty with Lebanon.

The euphoria which preceeded the first was soon replaced by a sober, more realistic stance and in some circles by a degree of apprehension following Sadat's assassination. Today, many would agree that although the framework of the Treaty exists, it is devoid of any meaningful content. The hoped-for dynamic, peaceful relationship between Egypt and Israel has turned into a static, peaceful co-existence.

In the case of Lebanon, the assassination of the President-elect, Bashir Jumayl, the continuous presence of foreign forces on the Lebanese soil, and the rift among the communities inside Lebanon do not portend a peaceful or stable future in the area. The undermining of the Lebanese sovereignty by the PLO over the past eight years and the unwelcomed Syrian troops in the Bakaa region have contributed much to the fragmentation of Lebanese society and to the stagnation of Lebanese politics.

This instability in the area is to a large extent the result of the intransigence of the Arab states and the PLO to slove the Palestinian problem and to come to terms with the Jewish state. The wars of the last 35 years, waged by the Arab states against Israel allegedly in the name of the Palestinian cause, have not brought the Palestinian people any closer to solution.

The maximalist stand taken by the Palestinian leaders in the past and the PLO at present have yielded no results. The history of the area proves that the longer the Palestinians postpone accepting a solution, the faster policies become realities and the harder it becomes for the Palestinians to change reality.

The war in Lebanon has proven this point again. The destruction of the PLO's military infrastructure, its political status and its organizational capability, has again exposed the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

Most of the international community and most of the Arab states hold to the concept of "self-determination" for the Palestinians as the solution. This means a state of their own on the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Such a proposal has been rejected by Israel which sees in it a threat to its security if not to its very existence.

But the proposed solution of self-determination for the Palestinians has also been rejected on legal and historical grounds and considered inadmissible because of its fallacy. The argument has been made by a number of scholars, such as Julius Stone, who succeeded in giving a legal dimension to the historical perspective.

In his book, *Israel and Palestine: Assault on the Law of Nations,* Stone argues "that 'Palestine' had no special geographical or political role and 'Palestinians' no specific sociopolitical or cultural identity within the area, during twelve hundred years following the Arab conquest in the seventh century." (Stone, p.10). He quotes Bernard Lewis who noted that "Palestine (which for Moslems) had never meant more than an administrative subdistrict ... had been forgotten even in that limited sense." (Stone, p.11). Therefore, Stone concludes somewhat indignantly, that "the notion that the Arabs living in Palestine regarded themselves in 1917, at the time when Woodrow Wilson's seminal self-determination principle emerged, as a Palestinian Arab people in the sense required by the self-determination concept ... is thus a figment of unhistorical imagination." (Stone, p.11-12).

According to Stone, the time at which a distinctive Palestinian national self-recognition emerged was in 1966 with the adoption of the Palestinian National Charter. "And that covenant itself testified with striking clarity that the belatedness of this self-recognition as Palestinians raised grave obstacles to 'national' ambitions at so late a stage. For this was nearly half a century after the former Turkish empire had been allocated between the Jewish and Arab liberation claimants, of the latter of which Palestinians were a part, but not a distinctive part at that time." (Stone, p.12).

To overcome those obstacles, the Covenant used two arguments: "1) It claimed that Palestinians were a part of the 'Arab nation' to which that allocation was made and which by 1966 had come to control a dozen new independent states in the Middle East. But it also insisted (2) that in 1966 the Palestinians were a separate people entitled to the whole of Palestine as an indivisible territorial unit for its homeland".

Stone claims that 1917 was the date for the application of the self-determination principle to both the Arab and the Jewish nations. This was acknowledged by both parties, by Emir Faisal for the Arab side and by Chaim Weizmann fot the Jewish side in the Agreement of Understanding and Cooperation of January 3, 1919.

"It is then a historical fact that at the time Jewish and Arab national movements ... appeared simultaneously as liberation claimants, 'Jews' constituted a cluster of scattered people in the Middle East and elsewhere; 'Arabs' were similarly scattered over the Middle East and elsewhere. Each people within itselft shared cultùral and religious traditions and experiences deeply rooted in the Middle East region. The Jewish people claimed one part, Palestine, as its historic home with which it had nearly four millennia of unbroken connection. The Arabs claimed virtually the whole of the territories removed by World War I from Turkish hegemony. These were the two claimant peoples, the Jews and the Arabs..." (Stone, p.14).

The Arabs in claiming sovereignty received 21 states extending throughout the Middle East and Africa. This was achieved within a historical context as follows:

1) Contrary to implied notions, Jewish and Arab claims in the Middle East "came to their form of liberation together and not by way of Jewish encroachment on an already vested and exclusive Arab domain." (Stone, p.16).
2) The territory allocated to the Arabs "was more than a hundred times greater in area and hundreds of times richer in resources than the 'Palestine' designated in 1917 for the Jewish national home."
3) "By successive steps thereafter, the already tiny allocation to Jewish claims was further encroached upon. Thus, already in 1922, a major part of it (namely, 35,468 out of 46,339 square miles including the more sparsely populated regions) was cut away to establish the Kingdom of Transjordan." (Stone, p.16).

Thus the share of the Jewish people under the liberation principle is about "one two-hundredth of the entire territory distributed." (Stone, p.17).

This distribution, according to Stone, has not impaired the self-determination of any of the nations. The reason being that at the time of distribution there was no distinctive Palestinian people. The Arabs who lived in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and elsewhere were considered part of the Arab nation to which a vast territory was allocated, in the same way as Jews were found in these and other lands of the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, the allocation and distribution of the territory of the Ottoman Empire was between two nations, the Arab and the Jewish, regardless of what regions they originated from. Consequently many of these Arabs and Jews "were to pay a price for the inheritances gained by their respective nations." (Stone, p.17).

From this brief exposé, Stone concluded that if there were any claims against the State of Israel for its encroachment on the right of self-determination of a Palestinian Arab nation, then this should be directed against all the former Ottoman territories distributed after World War I, most of which now make up the 21 Arab states in the region. In contrast, Israel in its miniscule territory, assumed the responsibility for approximately 600,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands; "this provides a model for the corresponding duties of other Arab states." (Stone, p.126).

With reference to the "Right of Return or Compensation" Stone writes:

"The solutions found for the refugee problems of Europe after World War II, involving far greater number of refugees and states concerned, show that 'return or compensation' is neither a necessary nor a feasible basis of solution. Its basis was rather international cooperation based on human planning." In addition, to blame Israel for the refugee problem is "to ignore the responsibility arising from the indubitable relation, direct and immediate, between Arab State aggression and the very creation of the refugee problem." (Stone, p.128).

One cannot conclude Stone's thesis without devoting a few lines to Jordan.

The severance of a large part of mandate Palestine then designated as part of the Jewish National Home, had as a purpose "the assurance of a territorial unit for movement of Palestinian Arabs." Therefore, "with or without the West Bank, Jordan is unambiguously Palestinian territory, and the vast majority — over 60% of its inhabitants — consist of Palestinian Arabs." (Stone, p.23). Some estimate that the Palestinians in Jordan control 70% of the economy, 75% of government posts, and in Amman 85% of the population is estimated to be Palestinians.

In the same vein, Lord Balfour was quoted as writing in a memo of August ll, 1919 that 'Palestine' referred to all the territory east of the Jordan River. Another reference was made to Crown Prince Hassan who was reported to have told the National Assembly on February 2, 1970 that Palestine and Jordan are synonymous.

The picture which emerges from the analysis of the legal and political history of the region as described above is one which indicates unequivocably that the distribution of the territory of the Ottoman Empire in 1917 between Jews and Arabs also created a Jewish and Arab regugee problem.

In 1948, with the final settlement of the area, the Arabs emerged with more than a dozen states in the region, and the Jews with one state.

Inversely to its territorial size, Israel absorbed approximately 600,000 Jewish refugess from the Middle East, while Arab refugees from the same region were kept by the Arab states in camps, ensuring the continuity of their status as refugees and their conditions of poverty and misery. This situation cannot be blamed on Israel but rather it rests squarely on Arab governments for their discrimination against their brethren, for harboring divisiveness and disunity among Arabs, and for refusing to share their vast territory with their co-religionists. The Palestinian problem essentially remains one of refugees who need to be settled in the same manner as the Jews from Arab lands were settled 30 years ago.

The war in Lebanon may very well be yet another eye-opener for the Palestinian regugees who might seek an urgent settlement through international and national cooperation.

Within this framework, both the Arab nation and the Jewish nation, sole claimants of the Ottoman Empire territories, should work together unrelentlessly to settle the Arab refugees of Palestine, drawing from the experience of the Jewish State in settling their own refugees from Arab lands. In this case, the Jews from Arab countries now living in Israel since 1948 could serve as a model for their Palestinian counterpart in their rehabilitation and integration.

In this atmosphere of mutual cooperation and understanding, one would then expect from Israel and the Arab states to settle finally the claims of compensation and reparation of both Jewish and Arab refugees in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

Beer Sheva
August 1983

Maurice M. Roumani

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Almost two years have passed since the first edition of this publication made its appearance.

The study, which aimed, if only minimally, at underlining the realities of Arab-Jewish relations over the centuries and the displacement of Jewish and Arab populations since 1948, has been greeted in many circles as a refreshing contribution to the understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Many have expressed dismay at the belated appearance of a publication on these issues. Others have stated that much of the history which shows how Arabs treated Jews in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa has been unknown, ignored or suppressed. Yet others felt that, in searching for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, one should bear in mind the interplay of forces which governed Jewish-Arab relations and the position of Arab Islam *vis-a-vis* the Jew. All were in agreement, however, in pointing out the need for such a publication in order to place in historical perspective the current strife between the State of Israel and the Arab states.

The lively response from the public and the overwhelming demand for the publication made it necessary to print a second and revised edition which will incorporate the comments and criticism of colleagues and friends who have been helpful in improving the manuscript. This edition will also reflect, wherever possible, recent changes in the political climate of the region and will include the latest statistics on the subject.

For these improvements, I am indebted to my colleagues, particularly Mrs. Channa Palti. I am also grateful to friends and colleagues who provided much assistance and information at different stages, while preparing the original manuscript. I am especially thankful to Dr. Yaacov S. Zemach, Prof. André Chouraqui, Dr. Moshe Sharon, Prof. Martin Gilbert, Dr. Y. Meron, Mrs. Malka Shulewitz, Mr. and Mrs. David Littman and several members of the Institute Ethnic and Social Groups at Bar-Ilan University. I am also very grateful

Deborah Goldman who collaborated with me in the preparation of the original manuscript.

A special note of appreciation is reserved for Helene Korn, now my wife, for her collaboration during the writing of the original manuscript, and for her patience and assistance in revising the second edition.

This study and its publication, however, would not have been possible without the vision, energy and encouragement of Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat, Co-Chairman of the World Executive of WOJAC.

Maurice M. Roumani

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INTRODUCTION

In this publication we present some highly relevant and important facts concerning the rights of Jews who left Arab countries due to the persecution and oppression they suffered, and to their yearning for a life of independence and freedom in Israel and elsewhere.

Arab leaders pretend that idyllic relationships prevailed between Jews and Arabs in their countries preceding the advent of modern Zionism. However, they are fully aware that the reality was entirely different.

The information appearing in the following pages is the result of extensive research gleaned from a wide range of published material (as the lengthy bibliography would indicate). Much of this is being made available to the lay reader for the first time, in addition to material based on personal interviews and testimony never made public before.

This represents the first revised publication of the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC). The organization plans to make new material available periodically which will shed further light on the role of Jews from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and on their contribution to the development of the national wealth of these countries. It will also provide an account of their sufferings and torments; and of the manner in which they abandoned these countries, leaving behind their personal possessions and untold wealth in communal property and treasures accumulated during their thousands of years of history, as part of the price they were forced to pay for their freedom and independence.

Jews from Arab countries, who today number approximately two million the world over, cannot remain indifferent to the distortion of their identity, the blurring of their problems and the continuing violation of their rights.

Arab leaders persist in their refusal to recognize the State of Israel, which regained its independence, with the approval of the United Nations, as a result of the struggle of the Jewish people throughout the world to realize their historical

rights in their ancient homeland. The Arab leaders continue to use Arab refugees as a political tool in their efforts to wipe out the State of Israel. At the same time they completely disregard the rights of the Jewish people, the majority of whom were also refugees who have been absorbed by Israel and other countries.

With this in mind, a committee of representatives of Jews from Arab countries was formed, which convened a preparatory conference in Paris in November 1975. It established WOJAC, the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries. WOJAC's Israel Executive is now coordinating the activities of the branches being set up throughout the free world until a Head Office is established.

The Organization will defend the rights of former Jewish refugees before all international forums debating the problems of refugees in the Middle East. It will act according to Resolution 242 of the UN Security Council calling for "a just solution of the refugee problem," which cannot but refer to Jewish and Arab refugees alike.

The Organization will be a non-governmental (N.G.O.) body. Its main purpose is human and moral. It will take resolute action on behalf of Jews from Arab countries to re-establish their identity, their ancient heritage and traditions. It will act to assure their rights and to redress the moral and the material injustice perpetrated against them.

Above all, WOJAC will support the right of Jews in Israel to a life of security in their own country. It emphasizes that the exchange of populations which took place in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs is an accomplished and final fact: that Israel has absorbed approximately 600,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries, while the Arab states "absorbed" 590,000 Arabs who responded to the call of their leaders and abandoned the territory of Israel in 1948, and who are now living among their people in 20 Arab states with whom they share the same heritage, culture and language.

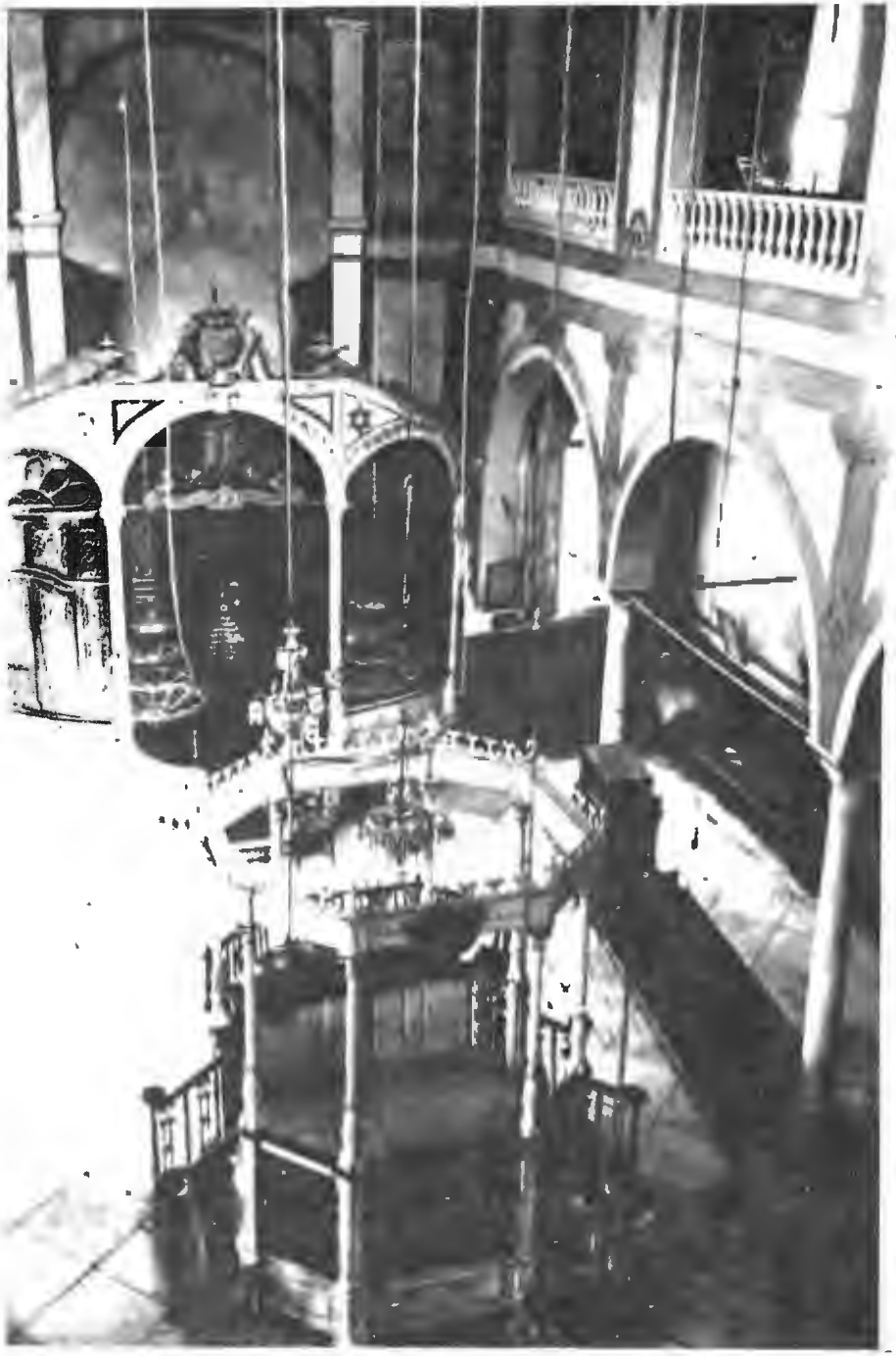
The Organization has not overlooked the positive aspects which characterized the relation of Jews with some of their Arab neighbors. However, it regrets that these segments of the Arab population did not have the power to prevent the Arab regimes and their rulers from inciting the masses and using persecution of Jews as a political tool.

The Organization will make every effort to increase the prospects of peace in the Middle East, based on secure and lasting borders. WOJAC sees itself as representing a segment of the population of the Middle East which, for thousands of years, has been rooted in the culture of its region. It will do everything in its power to build a bridge of friendship between Israel and its neighbors, while making the latter aware that peace in this troubled area can endure only if the rights of all minorities in the Middle East are assured.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Maurice M. Roumani and his research team. I would also like to thank the academic advisers, translators and typists for all their efforts in making this publication possible.

Mordechai Ben-Porat,
Co-Chairman of the World Executive of WOJAC

PART ONE



The *Al-Ustad* synagogue in Cairo, one of the oldest and largest synagogues in the Jewish quarter.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا ۖ
وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ
وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَنْ
نَدْخُلَهَا حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا ۚ فَإِنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا
فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ

قَالَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا
ادْخُلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ ۚ فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ غَالِبُونَ ۚ
وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

"And remember when Moses said to his people, 'O my people, call to mind Allah's favor upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings, and gave you what He gave not to any other among the peoples.'

"'O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you and do not turn back, for then you will turn losers.'

"They said, 'O Moses, there is in that *land* a haughty and powerful people, and we shall not enter it until they go forth from it. But if they go forth from it, then we will enter it.'

"Thereupon two men from among those who feared *their Lord*, on whom Allah had conferred His favor, said, 'Enter the gate, *advancing* against them; when *once* you have entered it, then surely you will be victorious. And put your trust in Allah, if you are believers'."

The Quran, *sura el-Maida*, chapter 5, verses 19–22.

The Execution of the Jewess.
A painting by Alfred De Hodenck, Paris 1910.

CHAPTER ONE

The Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries

In 1948, there were over 800,000 Jews living in the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa. By 1976, a generation later, most of the Jewish communities in these countries had disappeared, leaving behind a few thousand Jews scattered over a number of cities in the region.

This sad and relatively abrupt end to one of the oldest Jewish settlements in the world is in great part due to a long chain of intolerance, discrimination, degrading civil codes and often cruel persecutions which were meted out to members of the Jewish faith by their host countries since the rise of Islam. There were times when Jews enjoyed a degree of tolerance and protection under the law, and in some instances even rose to prominence under Arab rule. But these periods are known to have been more the exception than the rule. Research has shown that the position of Islam and the Arabs *vis-a-vis* the Jew has been ambivalent at best and hence the ups and downs in their treatment of Jews over the last 1300 years.

The declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 as an independent Jewish state in the Middle East served, on one hand as an additional pretext for the intensification and legitimization of anti-Jewish measures in Arab lands, and on the other, as an opportunity to get rid of the Jews by tacitly permitting them to emigrate. Several Arab countries have in some instances indirectly encouraged this trend by closing an eye to the clandestine Zionist activities and operations in their countries. Later, however, this trend was reversed, so that today Jews in some Arab countries are held as hostages.

CONDITIONS FOR JEWS BECOME UNBEARABLE

With the United Nations resolution on the partition of Palestine, Arab riots broke out against numerous Jewish communities throughout the Arab world. Conforming to Arab anti-Jewish practices in the past, Jewish shops, homes and

synagogues were burned and looted; hundreds of Jews were murdered in the streets, thousands were imprisoned in the following months as criminals and suspects. Movement was restricted, emigration to Israel banned and many Jews were deprived of their citizenship. Jews who at one time were influential in commerce suddenly lost their holdings; bank accounts belonging to Jews were frozen, and property valued at millions of dollars was gradually confiscated. As in previous centuries, Jews were further removed from government agencies and their admission to public office was severely restricted. Jews lost their means of survival; they became hostages in their own countries of origin. Consequently, they could no longer remain there.

Where once Jewish communities flourished and thrived, now their traces have been erased as Jews in large numbers were compelled to leave.

The following table summarizes the dramatic disappearance of Jewish communities in the Arab world between 1948 and 1976.[1]

ESTIMATED JEWISH POPULATION IN ARAB COUNTRIES
1948 AND 1976

	1948	*1976*
Morocco	265,000	17,000
Algeria	140,000	500
Tunisia	105,000	2,000
Libya	38,000	20
Egypt	75,000	100
Iraq	135,000	400
Syria	30,000	4,350
Lebanon	5,000	500
Yemen	55,000	1,000
Aden	8,000	0
TOTAL	856,000	25,870

THE EXODUS

The State of Israel served as a natural refuge for the majority of Jews from Arab countries. Some departed independently. Others were involved in massive rescue missions organized by the local communities and the Israeli authorities. Outstanding examples are the Jews of Yemen and Iraq, who were airlifted *en masse* to Israel between 1948 and 1951. Similarly, the Jewish community of Libya was almost entirely relocated to Israel. To this day, a total of 586,268 Jews from Arab countries arrived in Israel[2] with at least another 200,000 emigrating to France, England and the Americas. Including their offspring, the total number of Jews who were displaced from their homes in Arab countries and who live in Israel today is 1,136,436, about 41% of the total population.[3] At least another 500,000 currently reside in France, Canada, the United States and Latin America.

The high influx of Jews from Arab countries into Israel shortly after its establishment as a state had a significant influence on the demographic make-up of its population. In 1931, only 1 out of every 4 Jews living in the Land of Israel came from Asia and Africa. By 1948 there were still only 70,000 of the latter in Israel as compared to 253,661 Israeli-born Jews and 393,013 Jews from Europe and America, out of a total population of 716,678 Jews.[4]

In the early '50's the picture changed dramatically. By 1951, Jews from Arab countries made up nearly 30% of the entire population. This unusually rapid change in the demographic make-up of the population was due to the thousands of Jews that were pouring into Israel as a result of persecutions in Arab countries as well as in Europe. During the years 1948 to 1951, nearly 50% of all immigrants, totalling 387,000, came from Asia and Africa, with a similar number coming, at that time, from Europe and America. During the two-year period from 1955 to 1957, the percentage of Jews from Arab lands arriving in Israel rose to 69%; in 1955 alone this group represented 92% of all immigrants. This high proportion is not surprising in view of the approximately 100,000 that came during those years from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia alone.[5]

The majority of Jewish refugees from Arab lands arrived in Israel during the first three years of statehood. Of the total 586,070 that arrived to date, nearly 400,000 entered the country between 1948 and 1951.[6] The effects of this mass immigration in such a short period of time can also be observed in the total population increase for those years. Before May 15, 1948, there were little more than 700,000 Jews living in Israel. By 1951 the population figure doubled to 1,404,400.

Immigration of Jews from Arab countries to Israel was not an entirely new phenomenon in 1948. Jews had arrived in Israel from Arab countries as early as 1881, when a group of more than 2,000 Yemenite Jews succeeded in completing the long trek to Palestine a year before the first Eastern European settlers (*Bilu*) arrived. By 1948, over 45,000 Jews from Arab countries had immigrated to the

[1] Based on: official census of each country; yearbooks of the Jewish communities; The Jewish Case Before The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 1946; Hayyim Cohen, 1952 and 1973; David Sitton, 1974; André Chouraqui, 1952; Joseph B. Shechtman, 1961; David Littman, 1975. (See Bibliography)

[2] Government of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975. This figure does not, of course, include Jews from the non-Arab Islamic countries, e.g. Iran, Turkey, or those from Kurdistan.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Government of Israel, *Statistical Abstract*, 1974 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974).

[5] Government of Israel, *Immigration to Israel*, 1948–1972 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974).

[6] Government of Israel, *Statistical Abstract*, 1974, *op. cit.*

Land of Israel. The motivation of these early settlers was primarily spiritual. Prompted by a messianic hope, they were determined to make the long journey to the land of their ancestors.

Jews arriving in Israel after 1948 were similarly inspired by the ideal of returning to their homeland. However, for the most part, these people were refugees, forced to flee from their homes and to abandon centuries of established culture and tradition as a result of persecutions which made life for Jews in Arab countries increasingly unbearable.

The following table shows the number of Jews who emigrated from Arab countries between 1948 and 1972:[7]

IMMIGRATION OF JEWS FROM ARAB LANDS
TO ISRAEL FROM MAY 15, 1948 TO MAY 22, 1972

Country	*Number*
Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria *	330,833
Libya	35,666
Egypt	29,325
Syria, Lebanon *	10,402
Yemen, Aden *	50,552
Iraq	129,292
TOTAL	586,070

* Individual statistics for these countries were not recorded before 1950; therefore, we find it more accurate to list them together.

DWINDLING JEWISH COMMUNITIES: A SURVEY

Morocco

The Jewish community of Morocco dates back to the destruction of the First Temple in the year 586 BCE. By 1948, this ancient community, the largest in North Africa, numbered 265,000. Composed primarily of money changers, artisans, and traders, the Jewish population was 73% urban and constituted 9% of the total urban population of Morocco. In 1947, a large Jewish community existed in Casablanca, with over 86,000 inhabitants. Other cities which had large Jewish populations were Marrakesh, Fez, Meknes and Rabat, each comprising a population of more than 15,000 Jews in 1947.[8]

[7] Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974.
[8] Joseph B. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles*, p. 273.

Immigration to Israel started upon the initiative of small groups who arrived at the time of Israel's independence. However, the waves of mass immigration which brought a total of more than 250,000 Moroccan Jews to Israel were prompted by anti-Jewish measures carried out in response to the establishment of the State of Israel. On June 4, 1948, riots broke out in northern Morocco killing and injuring dozens of Jews. Shortly afterwards, the Jews began to leave *en masse*.

During the two-year period between 1955 and 1957 alone, over 70,000 Moroccan Jews arrived in Israel. In 1956 emigration to Israel was banned and by 1959 Zionist activities became illegal in Morocco. During these years more than 30,000 Jews left for France and the Americas. In 1963, the ban on emigration to Israel was lifted bringing another 100,000 to her shores.

Today, the Jewish community of Morocco has dwindled to less than 10% of its original size. Of the 17,000 Jews that remain, two-thirds live in Casablanca. Since 1964, 30 Jewish courts have been closed down, including the High Rabbinical Court. Jewish schools still exist but many are under Muslim administration. There has been no Jewish press in Morocco since 1966.[9]

Generally speaking, the Jews who remain in Morocco have a reasonably stable existence; however, occasional outbursts of anti-Israel sentiments make daily life for Jews insecure.

Algeria

In 1948, there were 140,000 Jews in Algeria. Before 1962, there were 60 Jewish communities, each maintaining at least one synagogue, one Rabbi, and its own educational services. During the three months between May and July of 1962, almost all the Jews of Algeria left the country, following the Evian Agreement which granted independence to Algeria.[10] Today, there remain merely 500 Jews.

During the struggle for independence, pressure was placed upon Jews to endorse the nationalist cause. A spokesman for the Liberation Party indicated in 1960: "Jews will endure the consequences of their hesitant attitude when Algeria will come into being." In addition, they were also harassed by the existing government. Consequently, 14,000 Jews emigrated to Israel and another 125,000 to France, leaving behind only a tiny fraction of what used to be one of North Africa's largest Jewish communities.[11]

Today, the Jews that remain in Algeria no longer maintain any independent form of communal organization. They are under the supervision of the French Secretariat of the World Jewish Congress. In Algiers, for a community that numbered 30,000 in 1960, and had 12 synagogues, only one synagogue remains.

Tunisia

Similar to the conditions for Jews in Algeria, the rise of Tunisian nationalism led to anti-Jewish legislation and, in 1961, caused Jews to leave in great numbers. In

[9] American Jewish Congress, *Jewish Communities in the World*, p. 48 (Heb.).
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

1948, the Tunisian Jewish community had numbered 105,000, with 65,000 living in Tunis alone. By 1961, the total Jewish population had declined to 70,000 and in 1968 there were only 12,000 Jews left in Tunisia. Heightened anti-Jewish persecutions during the Six-Day War influenced even more to leave. In that year 7,000 emigrated to France.[12]

The Jews of Tunisia constituted a wealthy, prestigious community including, at one time, a Member of Parliament. The change that occurred in government policy generated fear and insecurity for the Jews which eventually caused most of them to leave. Over 50,000 emigrated to Israel. In 1958, the Jewish Community Council was abolished. Today only 2,000 Jews remain in Tunisia.

Libya

The Libyan Jewish community, which numbered 38,000 in 1948, is an example of a community which disappeared entirely as a result of anti-Jewish activities. With the outbreak of anti-Jewish riots in 1945 and in 1948, the Jewish community witnessed a wave of pogroms resulting in the loss of life and property.[13] In 1951, upon Libya's independence and membership in the Arab League, conditions worsened.

Jews were thus forced to leave *en masse*. The overwhelming majority, 35,612, emigrated to Israel, as many as 30,000 arriving by 1951. Illegal emigration to Italy started in 1949, enabling 2,107 Libyan Jews to eventually find refuge in Israel. Entire communities were forced to uproot themselves. The whole community of Zliten, numbering 604, arrived in Israel in July of 1949. Similarly, entire communities from the province of Tripolitania, including the ancient cities of Garian-Tigrina and Jefren (approximately 15,000 people) arrived in Israel during 1950.[14]

In the '60's only a few hundred Jews remained in Libya. With the increased hostilities resulting from the Six-Day War, they too were forced to flee, leaving behind all their possessions. Today, a mere 20 Libyan Jews remain in the country.

Egypt

In 1948, the number of Jews living in Egypt was estimated at 75,000. By 1956, this figure declined to 40,000. Ten years later, the number dwindled even further, to 2,500, and today there remain only 100.

The exodus of Jews from Egypt was prompted by a history of continuous anti-Jewish measures. In 1947, Jewish employment and economic opportunities were curtailed. In 1948, Jewish property was confiscated and hundreds of Jews were arrested.

Consequently, Jews were forced to flee, leaving behind all their property. By 1957, 25,000 Jews from Egypt had arrived in Israel. Another 10,000 fled to Alexandria. However, Jewish welfare institutions, schools and synagogues have in most cases been closed down.[15]

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[13] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[15] American Jewish Congress, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Iraq

The Jewish community in Iraq, one of the oldest and largest in the Arab world, numbered 135,000 in 1948. Over 77,000 lived in Baghdad alone, comprising a fourth of the capital's population. The community was wealthy and prestigious. Before World War II, Jews held a dominant place in the import trade and occupied high government positions.[16]

Today, only 400 Jews remain in Iraq. The overwhelming majority of the population was relocated to Israel, as a result of intensified anti-Jewish actions which started with the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine in 1947 and continued till after the cease fire with Israel in 1949. Hundreds were killed and imprisoned during anti-Jewish riots. Jewish property was confiscated and Zionism became a capital crime.

Jews were thus forced to flee, and to leave all of their belongings behind. Between 1949 and 1952, 123,371 Iraqi Jews were airlifted directly to Israel in what came to be known as "Operation Ezra and Nehemia."

Few Jews remain in Iraq today and those who do are continuously threatened with harassment by local officials.

Syria

In 1943, the Jewish community of Syria had 30,000 members. This population was mainly distributed between Aleppo, where 17,000 Jews lived, and Damascus, which had a Jewish population of 11,000.

Anti-Jewish riots which broke out as early as 1945 and 1947 prompted the denial of basic rights to Jews. In 1945, the government restricted emigration to Israel. Jewish property was burned and looted. In 1949, banks were instructed to freeze the accounts of Jews.

This situation caused 15,000 Jews to leave Syria by 1948. 10,000 emigrated to the U.S.A. and another 5,000 to Israel. Today, 4,350 Jews remain in Syria: 3,000 live in Damascus, another 1,000 in Aleppo and 350 in Kamishli. The remaining Jews in Syria are denied free movement or contact with the outside world. Those who have family in Israel are always in danger of persecution by local officials.

Lebanon

The emigration of Jews from Lebanon followed a somewhat different pattern as compared to the Jews of other Arab countries, primarily as a result of the Christian-Arab rule which characterized the political structure of this country and which conducted a policy of relative tolerance towards its Jewish population.

Despite the basically positive circumstances enjoyed by Lebanese Jews, they too felt insecure and decided to emigrate. The majority left for France, Italy, England and South America, and some for Israel in 1967.

In 1974, 1,800 Jews remained in Lebanon, the majority concentrated in Beirut. Today, after the civil war in Lebanon, very little is known about the size or the

[16] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

conditions of this Jewish community. A reliable source estimates that in December 1976 only 500 Jews were left in Lebanon.

Yemen

"Operation Magic Carpet," the dramatic airlift which brought 48,818 Yemenite Jews to Israel in 430 flights during 1949 and 1950, is another example of the displacement of an entire Jewish community from its ancient roots in the Arab world.

Fifty-five thousand Jews lived in two main cities and in 150 rural and desert localities in 1948. Today only a few hundred remain.

Emigration from Yemen to Israel started as early as 1881, when over 2,000 arrived in Palestine. Another 15,000 came between 1919 and 1948, mainly for Zionist and religious reasons. Their followers of the 1950's, however, were forced to flee persecutions and increasingly difficult social conditions.

Aden

The history of modern anti-Jewish persecutions in Aden is a bitter and long one. On December 2, 1947, the Arabs proclaimed a solidarity strike against the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine. One hundred Jews were murdered, the great synagogue was burned, Jewish property was rampaged, looted and destroyed. Riots of similar intensity destroyed Jewish property again in 1958, 1965 and 1967.

The Jewish community of Aden, numbering 8,000 in 1948, was forced to flee. By 1959 over 3,000 arrived in Israel. Many fled to the U.S.A. and England. Today there are no Jews left in Aden.

CONCLUSION

The establishment of the State of Israel and the changing political climate in the region during the post-war years seemed to provide an impetus as well as an opportunity for these well-established communities to seek a way out of their long years of suffering and subjugation.

Prior to these events, few Jews left Arab countries despite the insecurity and the mob violence which erupted time and again. Emigration to another country, including Palestine under Ottoman rule, offered no promise of improvement or security. More important, the feeling of deep-rooted affinity with the native culture shared by the majority of Jews in these countries, as well as a sense of organic linkage to the environment forged over centuries, precluded the thought of seeking refuge elsewhere. Thus, the intensification of anti-Jewish measures resulting from a combination of factors such as rising Arab nationalism, the establishment of the State of Israel and the general political climate of the time, which also witnessed the transfer and movement of populations on an unprecedented scale, made the displacement of Jews from Arab countries an inevitable consequence.

CHAPTER TWO

The Transfer to Israel: Hardships of Displacement

Out of 856,000 Jews living in Arab countries in 1948, the overwhelming majority found refuge from Arab persecution in Israel. The remaining were dispersed throughout the world. In the various countries that they inhabited previously, many were wealthy and prestigious members of their local Jewish communities. However, confronted with a political and social climate of intensified and unbearable hostility, they were forcibly uprooted, leaving behind their public and private property. Consequently, the majority arrived in Israel without any means of their own.

They came from countries in which they were repeatedly denied the opportunity of equal citizenship. At various times, different Arab countries imposed limitations on the Jews in the fields of education, professional life, and economic enterprise. When these circumstances compelled them to leave, the Arab states did not hesitate to proclaim appropriate decrees designed to strip the Jews of their possessions.

Thus, upon their arrival in Israel, these Jews had no means with which to sustain themselves and, therefore, became dependent on the new state, which, at that time, was struggling for its survival. The young country, poor and lacking in natural resources and plagued by economic difficulties, was continuously being attacked by hostile neighbors. Immigrants were pouring into the country by the hundreds of thousands, many of them the exhausted survivors of concentration and displaced persons' camps. In 1949 alone, 240,000 immigrants were absorbed in Israel.[1] *Between 1948 and 1951, a total of 687,739 immigrants arrived in the country, a figure virtually identical to the total population of the new state in 1948, and almost half the number that arrived in the 24-year period from the establishment of the State until 1972.*[2]

[1] Government of Israel, *Immigration to Israel* 1948–1972 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974), p. 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Under normal circumstances, it would be impossible for a country to deal with so many immigrants at a time. Yet, the period was critical. Jews were being snatched from pits of destruction and Israel absorbed them.

In effect, during her early history, Israel was a country of refugees. Unlike her Arab neighbors, who were also faced with the influx of refugees but who entrusted their fate and rehabilitation in the hands of the UN, Israel, with the help of World Jewry, did everything possible to offer her Jewish refugees equal opportunity and the basic resources necessary for re-settlement and absorption. However, due to the difficult circumstances, the process was one of great suffering and struggle. The immigrants arrived with nothing and needed everything. They came in great numbers at a time when housing facilities were not readily available for so many people.

The *ma'abarah* (transit camp – familiar to the Arabs as "refugee camp") was the most common form of temporary settlement. Thousands of people were often crammed into a small space where shelter consisted of tin huts, tents, shacks made of cardboard or whatever materials were at hand. Often immigrants arriving at their destination found nothing more than an open field. The shortage of labor in Israel at the time and the great influx of immigrants made it impossible for the authorities to provide the necessary housing facilities. As a result, the immigrants had no choice but to construct their own shelters from whatever they could find. Families of 7, 8 and even 10 children were forced to huddle together under cramped conditions and with little to eat. Disease and illness were thus common in those early years of distress.

The following account describes only certain aspects of the suffering encountered by Jews from Arab countries upon their immigration to Israel:[3]

> *The great majority of them [immigrants from Arab countries] were housed in tents which were drenched from above and flooded from below during the heavy rains of the winter of 1949–50. The original plan called for a sojourn of a few weeks only in the immigrants' camps, after which each immigrant was to be sent to a permanent place of settlement. Actually, however, in view of the large number of immigrants, the rate of evacuation from the camps lagged constantly behind the rate at which the new immigrants were brought into Israel, and the period of sojourn in the camps was prolonged from three months to four months to six months to eight months...*
>
> *One of the main immigrants' reception camps was that of Rosh Ha'ayin, in which, at the height of its occupancy in 1950, there were some 15,000 Yemenite Jewish immigrants. They were all lodged in tents, fifteen of them in each tent. The few buildings in the camp were used to house the hospital and the clinics, the babies' homes, the kitchen and dining room, and the school. When the immigrants arrived, many of them were very weak. Mortality was high, and as many as 20 deaths occurred daily. In this respect a definite improvement was noticeable very soon, mortality decreased and generally the strength of the people increased. Practically all the immigrants (98% to be exact) suffered from trachoma when they arrived at Rosh Ha'ayin. After a four months sojourn in the camp, and constant medical treatment – often administered against the wishes of the patients – this percentage sank to 20%. The health of the children was also in very bad shape. Many adults as well as children suffered from venereal diseases.*

By 1951, 256,000 immigrants were still living in temporary settlements.[4] Compared to the 1,400,000 inhabitants of Israel at the time, this group comprised no less than one-fifth of the total population.

[3] Raphael Patai, *Between East and West*, pp. 207–208.

[4] Jewish Agency, *Report of the Executive Submitted to the 24th Zionist Congress* 1951–1955 (Jerusalem: Zionist Organization, 1955), p. 147.

Tents such as these marked the living conditions of thousands of Jews from Arab countries during the early years of statehood. This *ma'abara* (transit camp) was photographed in February 1951, near Haifa.

Rabbi Yacob Boccara of Tunis, early twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

The Historical Presence of Jews in the Middle East and North Africa

The dispersion of Jews from Arab countries and the hardships accompanying their immigration to Israel constitute an aspect of the Middle East refugee problem hitherto neglected. Jewish refugees were uprooted in their hundreds of thousands from lands of their birth in which they had dwelled for centuries prior to the Muslim conquest.

When the Arab armies of Islam began their whirlwind conquests of the Middle East in the 7th century, they encountered thousands of Jewish settlements - urban and rural, large and small – throughout Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa, beginning with the rich and varied, 10-centuries long Jewish presence in Arabia itself. As much as a thousand years before the birth of Muhammad, Jews had lived in these regions – this means, as of today, over 2600 years of continuous presence. "They have always formed an integral part of the indigenous population – as is perfectly natural, considering that the Orient, and especially the Eastern Mediterranean, is the original home of Judaism."[1] Pagan, Jewish and Christian sources attest to the presence of Jews in these regions since earliest times; archaeological discoveries give evidence of widespread Jewish settlement, especially from the 2nd century BCE on, in places as distant as Morocco and Yemen. How did this great diaspora develop? When – and why – did Jews first reach these lands – some so far from the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael)? When, in fact, did the Jews first settle in the Land of Israel?

Legends aside, it is possible to find answers to these questions in the Bible and contemporary non-Jewish sources, corroborated by archaeological evidence. Abraham, father of the Jewish people, left his home city of Ur on the Euphrates and wandered through the Fertile Crescent (modern Iraq and Syria) to the Promised Land in the first half of the 2nd millenium BCE (c. 1800 BCE) – part of a vast, similarly east-to-west migration of peoples. The biblical stories being well-

[1] S. Landshut, *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East*, p. 3.

known, it is enough to note that archaeologists place the final settlement of Israelite tribes in the Promised Land in the thirteenth century BCE. The first extra-biblical source to mention the presence of Jews is the victory seal of Egyptian Pharaoh Mernephtah (1220) who makes reference to "Israel" as denizens of the land.[2] From then till today the land has never been without Jews.[3]

Even at this early stage, the Jews of the Land of Israel were part of the world of the Mediterranean and the Fertile Crescent. Sometimes they became embroiled in regional conflicts due to the geopolitical importance of their homeland, situated between empires in Iraq, Syria and Egypt. During the period of the First Temple (c. 950–586), the Bible records the commercial, military and diplomatic ties that the Jews maintained with Egypt, Syria (Aram, Damascus; Aram Zova – modern Aleppo region) and Arabia. The expeditions of Solomon's fleet to Tarshish, Ethiopia and trade with southern Arabia (Sheba) are recorded. Many locations in Arabia are mentioned in the Bible, indicating that the Jews were familiar with Arabia and her inhabitants and had paid regular visits, at times settling permanently, as merchants and seafarers.[4] Scholars also date the beginning of influential Jewish presence in North Africa to this period, after the founding of Carthage (813 BCE) by the Phoenicians, who were so closely related – linguistically and culturally – to the Jews. From then "till the fall of Carthage the Jews, in partnership with the Phoenicians, molded North Africa with Semitic influences and won over many of its inhabitants to the Jewish religion."[5]

The destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, and the exiles which preceded and followed it, gave impetus to a more permanent Jewish settlement in these and other lands. The main group of exiles – there were always Jews who never left the Land of Israel – was taken in captivity to Babylonia, where they joined the Judean upper classes exiled 10 years before. Some Jews fled to Egypt, taking the prophet Jeremiah with them. The first permanent Jewish communities of any importance in North Africa date from this time.[6] A few years later, a Babylonian inscription indicates, the Jews exiled from Judea may have accompanied King Nabonidus to the Hijaz, where he ruled from Teima to Yathrib (552–542 BCE), and founded there what later became flourishing Jewish communities. These communities, which were extant until the 11th century, testify to 2000 years of continuous Jewish settlement in North Arabia.[7]

The Jewish community in Syria, due to its proximity to the Jewish people's center in the Land of Israel, also dates to biblical times.[8]

[2] For complete information see *Carta's Atlas for the History of Eretz Israel*, vol. I (biblical period), pp. 28–39.

[3] S. Katz, *The Jewish Presence in Palestine*, p. 7.

[4] H.Z. Hirschberg, *The Jews in Arabia* (Heb.), p. 265, and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. II, pp. 232–233.

[5] A. Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, pp. XVI, 8.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[7] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. II, p. 233. Ben Zvi. I. *Les Origines de l'etablissement des Tribus Israelites en Arable*, p. 144.

[8] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XV, p. 636.

The return to Judea from Babylonian captivity 70 years or so later was not a complete return – many of the Jews outside the Land of Israel remained where they were. During the Second Temple period (516 BCE–70 CE), these Diaspora communities expanded greatly, but they always maintained close ties with their fellow Jews in the Land of Israel, showing their loyalty to people and homeland by monetary and military support – the former, in terms of contributions to the Temple, and the latter during times of revolt (66 CE) or when Cleopatra sought to annex the Land of Israel during the reign of Alexander Janneus (104–78 BCE).

More accurate archaeological confirmation of these communities' existence and of Jewish settlement in Algeria and Morocco has come to light, especially for the period from the third century BCE onwards. The Egyptian ruler Ptolemy Lagos (323–282 BCE) settled Jews in the Cyrenian pentapolis and other localities – including Tripolitania – to strengthen his reign. Numerous signs of Jewish presence – ruins, coins, seals, gravestones – in Libya and Algeria are found, especially from the mid-2nd century BCE on, after the Roman conquest of Carthage (142 BCE). Greek, Latin and Talmudic texts attest to the fact that "life in the Jewish communities of North Africa during the Roman period was highly developed, well-organized, rich and vital."[9] Abundant and widespread inscriptions bearing Jewish names and unambiguous references to elements of the Jewish religion attest to an equally vital Jewish presence in Arabia, from the 1st century BCE on. Jewish and non-Jewish sources bear witness to the flourishing communities in Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

The first century CE, just prior to the Jewish Revolt and the destruction of the Second Temple, is a good place to pause and examine the character and distribution of these Jewish communities.

Jews had been leaving the Land of Israel not only because they were exiled or deported; a Jewish population explosion in the first centuries BCE and CE caused many Jews to seek new homes outside the Holy Land. On the advice of their coreligionists from throughout the Diaspora who made the yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem, they set off for places which promised more political freedom than under the Romans in Palestine – like the port cities along the Mediterranean coast – or which offered economic opportunities where the trades they plied were needed.

The Jewish population of the Roman Empire at this time – excluding Mesopotamia and the many Jewish tribes in the interior of Arabia – has been estimated at 6–7 millions, with 1,000,000 in Egypt alone, mostly in Alexandria. Ancient and modern scholars agree that the Jews were a force to be reckoned with and that they wielded great influence.[10] Josephus, for example, notes how influential the Jews and Judaism were in Syria, especially at Antioch and Damascus, due to their great numbers.[11] The Jews played an important role in trade and

[9] A. Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[10] Information for the preceeding two paragraphs and following data on Jewish economic life is taken from J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain*, vol. I, pp. 209–211 and vol. II, chap. XXII, pp. 291–313.

[11] Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, VII: 43; quoted in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XV, p. 639.

commerce, although in the Diaspora as in the Land of Israel they remained primarily agriculturalists. In addition to farms and plantations, Jews owned bazaars in Syria, were seafarers (*naviculariі*) fulfilling a vital role in Egypt and Libya, and caravan enterpreneurs in Arabia and Transjordan; they specialized in silk in Yemen (Himyar), textiles in Babylonia, banking in Alexandria, the gold trade and metal-working in North Africa. Moreover, the Jews living in Palestine and abroad were engaged in the cultivation and export of Palestinian produce: the country's fruits and wines, balm, oils and timber were famous – indeed luxury items – throughout the empire. These Jewish communities were involved in the religious-political and intellectual ferment of the time, stemming from the confrontation with Hellenistic thought and Roman rule. Alexandrian Jewry, in particular, produced literary figures and philosophers, notably Philo (25 BCE–40 CE). It was there that the Bible was translated into Greek by 70 scholars in the third century BC and known as the *Septuaginta*.

The Jewish Revolt (66–73 CE), the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and the Bar Kochba Revolt (132–135 CE) affected the Jewish population and the landscape of the country drastically and had repercussions in the Diaspora as well (an increase in population due to emigration from Palestine and a reduction in numbers due to the harsh suppression of successive revolts, especially in 115–117 and 132–135). But the Jewish communities – in Palestine as elsewhere – managed to survive and continued to function. The period from the loss of national independence and the destruction of the Temple to the Muslim conquests was one of great religious, literary and social activity, during which the direction and shape of Judaism were formulated for generations to come. In the academies of learning in Palestine, the first post-biblical codification of Jewish law, the *Mishnah*, was written (3rd century), the exegetical homilies and parables of the *Midrash* were compiled (1st century) and the Jerusalem *Talmud* was composed (4th century). The latter's fragmentary nature is testimony to the difficult times – under Roman and Byzantine rule – in which it was written. In Babylonia, the academies of learning and their generations of scholars, notably at Sura and Pumbedita, took over the religious and scholarly leadership of the Jews after the third century and produced the Babylonian *Talmud* (6th century.)[12]

This vigorous and economically well-established community numbered, approximately, some 860,000 at the end of the Sassanid rule in the early 7th century.[13]

In Arabia, in the early 7th century, Muhammad began to preach his new faith, for whose acceptance the spread of Judaism had already prepared the way (in North Africa – among the Berbers – as in Arabia among the Arabs). In the early struggles for power, Muhammad and his followers exterminated or exiled some Jewish tribes; with others, treaties were made and tribute taken, so that Jews continued to live in north and south Arabia. Throughout the Middle East and

[12] Information for preceding paragraph from I. Epstein, *Judaism* (material extracted from throughout the book).

[13] Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, vol. II, pp. 249–250.

North Africa the Muslim armies met with numerous and long-established Jewish communities, a dynamic and living network comprising many types of social organization, but all with a strong consciousness of their peoplehood, stretching in an unbroken chain from Morocco to Egypt and from there to India.[14] In areas under Byzantine or other oppressive rule, the Jews greeted the victorious Muslims gladly; in regions (in North Africa) where they were independent, the Jews and their neighbors defended their settlements courageously.

Under Muslim rule, especially from the 10th century on, one could begin to refer to a unified "Mediterranean world" from the Maghreb to Iraq. Against a background of Jewish communities settled uninterruptedly for over 1000 years, constant inter-migrations were perhaps the most unchanging feature of the Jewish Diaspora for many centuries. Persecutions, political conditions, trade and new centers of learning sent Jews from town to town in the same country and on a larger scale, from East to West and West to East, in different countries.[15] A constant stream of scholars and *responsa* (questions and answers on Jewish law) flowed to and from Babylonia, and there was a continuous movement to *Eretz Yisrael* – pilgrimages and *aliyah* ("going up" to settle permanently in the Holy Land).

The careers of two important scholars give the best example of these migrations and of the intercommunal connections. Saadya Gaon (892–942) – philosopher, grammarian, liturgist, calendar expert, polemicist against the Karaite schism, translator of the Bible into Arabic (his translation is still used in some communities today) – was born in Fayyum, Upper Egypt, lived for a while in *Eretz Yisrael*, and was called to head the Academy at Sura. The great philosopher and physician Maimonides (1134–1204), called "the greatest religious mind of his time", was born in Spain, escaped Muslim persecution there to live briefly in Fez, then settled in Fostat (Old Cairo). His *Guide for the Perplexed* and especially his codification of Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*, were influential all over the Diaspora and aroused controversy among Jews in Syria, North Africa and Europe. Maimonides maintained close contact with the Yemenite Jews, sent them an epistle when they were suffering from harsh persecution, forced conversions and resultant messianic movements, and received contributions for his academy of learning from them and from Adenite Jews.[16]

The Jews of South Arabia (the Jewish communities in the Hijaz disappeared about this time) also sent contributions and questions regularly to the Babylonian and Jerusalem academies. In the 10th–12th centuries, San'a was the regional center for collections.[17] Yearly collections were also held in the communities of North Africa. The relations between the academies and these dispersed communities were not, however, limited only to money. Local Jewish religious

[14] St. Jerome (fifth century) quoted (in Goitein's lecture, "The Origin and Significance of North African Jewry") in World Jewish Congress, *Proceedings of the Seminar on Muslim-Jewish Relations in North Africa*, p. 7.

[15] World Jewish Congress, *ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

[16] Isidore Epstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 190, 199, 201, 208, 216, 254–256.

[17] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. I, p. 260.

and secular authorities (*dayyanim* and *nagidim*) in the Diaspora were given official recognition by the heads of the academies in Jerusalem and Baghdad. "The *Gaon* (head of the Jerusalem academy), who was the spiritual head of Western Jewry, had, owing to the institution of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, close personal connections with people from all over the Mediterranean world," and the Babylonian academy of Rav Hai Gaon (998–1038) had students from North Africa and Europe.[18]

Here are just a few more examples of the profound inter-dependence and the vitality that characterized the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean Diaspora from the 10th to the 15th centuries, when new forces came into play.

Maimonides' favorite disciple Rabbi Joseph ibn Aknin was born in Ceuta and settled finally in Aleppo. The *Nagid* of Cairo Jewry in 1448 was also born in North Africa and had lived many years in Jerusalem. The rabbinical academy at Kairouan (founded c. 970) specialized in the study of the Jerusalem Talmud, maintained strong ties with the Babylonian center and attracted many scholars. Fez was also the home of renowned scholars, like grammarian and poet Rabbi Dunash ben Labrat (920–990) Rabbi Judah ibn Kuraish, native of Tiaret and called "the Father of Hebrew Grammar", and Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (1013–1103), autho: of a revolutionary compendium of talmudic laws and rulings which was studied in all Jewish communities. Tunisia in the 10th and 11th centuries was the center of caravan traffic from Morocco and the Sahara to Egypt, Arabia and the East, and an important center for the production and export of Jewish books. Tunisian Jews were found from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and had sizeable communities in Cairo and southern Europe; their wide-ranging commercial activities are recorded in the Cairo Geniza material. Adenite Jews from the 12th to the 16th century were also important and widely-travelled merchants. Madmun (d. 1151) of Aden was recognized by the Baghdad and Cairo Jewish authorities as a regional *dayyan* when Aden and India formed one juridical diocese. He was the *nagid* of Yemenite Jewry and his official position as representative of the Jewish merchants of Aden brought him into close contact with merchants from the Maghreb and Egypt. He dispatched goods to Persia and settled disputes between Jews of Morocco.[19]

From the fourteenth through the seventeenth century, the influx of, respectively, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Jewish refugees led to a flowering of Jewish learning and revitalized secular study and commerce as well. These Jews joined the already existing communities throughout North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. Tlemcen and Algiers became centers of North African Jewry after the arrival of the Spanish exiles. Tlemcen was the final station on the Sudanese gold route – also known as "the Jerusalem of the West." Algiers in 1391 became the home of Rav Simon Duran, his son Rav Solomon Duran and Rav Isaac b. Sheshet Barfat, whose writings and teachings inspired North African Jewry. In

[18] S.D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, pp. 296, 299–300.

[19] Information for preceding paragraph from throughout Goitein, *ibid.*, and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XVI, p. 741, vol. I, pp. 260–261.

the 14th century, one year's volume of Jewish trade was 10,000 dinar out of a total of 15–20,000 dinar for the whole city – which indicates the important part the Jews played in the prosperity of the city.[20]

The Jews in North Africa and the Middle East did not, however, limit their contributions to the countries in which they lived to building and maintaining trade and commerce. When they were allowed, under tolerant and reasonable rulers, to take part in the government and public life, some rose to positions of great responsibility and authority, and others fulfilled vital functions in the administrative bureaucracy (as in Egypt and Syria) – even though a recrudescence of Muslim fanaticism often meant their dismissal and at times murder. In 14th century Egypt and Syria under the Mamluks, the rulers' desire to direct the masses' discontent away from themselves led them to accede to the influence of Muslim theologians and to renew humiliating decrees and dismissals. The Jews, however, played such an important role in the administration that the rulers were often forced to reinstate them.[21] It is possible to give just a few of the better-known examples of these 'Court Jews', who played an active role in Jewish communal life as well. These included:

Simari al-Yahudi (c. 695), Keeper of the Mint in Ummayyad Damascus; Isaac Israeli (c. 845–945), court physician under Caliph Ziyadat Allah and the Fatimid Obeid Allah; Joseph b. Phineas and Aaron ben Amram at the Baghdad court of the Abassid Caliph (903–932); Ya'qub ibn Killis (d. 991), a Jew from Baghdad, later converted to Islam, the architect of the financial administration of Cairo and first vizier of the Fatimid ruler; Abu Sa'ad Ibrahim (d. 1047) and Abu Nasr Aaron (d. 1048), court merchants and officials in Cairo; Sa'ad ad-Daula (d. 1291) and Rashid ad-Din (d. 1318), Jewish viziers under the Arghun Khan and Ghazan Khan respectively; Yusuf Levi (d. 1768), customs chief of Alexandria; Naftali Busnach (d. 1805), chief aide and adviser of the Dey of Algiers; Saul Farhi, finance minister to the governor of Damascus, and Hayyim Farhi (d. 1820) who succeeded him and organized the Turkish resistance to Napoleon at Acre. In North Africa, too, from the 16th to the 19th centuries, various rulers appointed Jewish diplomats to handle their relations with European governments. However, "many a Court Jew had to pay with his life for his prominence, his dedication and the loyal and faithful performance of his assignments, and suffered a violent death."[22]

During the 2600 years that Jewish communities have lived in the Middle East they have preserved – despite a dizzying succession of invasions, wars, persecutions, pestilence, earthquake and famine – their religion and distinct character while striking ever-deeper roots in the region. Indeed, they have not only preserved but immeasurably enriched Jewish tradition, creating a strong, dynamic network of communities among which both commodities and customs, goods and

[20] Information for preceding paragraph from Chouraqui, *op. cit.*; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. II, pp. 621–622; and Goitein, *op. cit.*

[21] Yahudiya Masriya, *Les Juifs en Egypte*, p. 25; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XV, p. 641.

[22] Walter Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Medieval Islam*, p. XV and on.

ideas were exchanged. Moreover, these Jewish communities have contributed greatly to the wealth and culture of the whole region, playing an important and at times vital role in the economies of the lands in which they lived.

But while the Jewish people in the Middle East and Norh Africa developed and contributed to the building of their countries, they never ceased to see the Land of Israel as their national homeland, or to realize in their own lives the religious duty of pilgrimage. As Rev. Dr. James Parkes has noted:

> *It is correct to say 'the Jewish* people' *and not 'Jews'; for even when they were scattered in a thousand ghettoes in innumerable different Christian and Muslim countries, the Jews recognized themselves as, and were universally recognized by others to be, a single people.... They were recognized as both a religion and a nation, and it occurred to no one that there was anything inconsistent in the dual attribution... This recognition by themselves and others that they were still a single people reinforces the naturalness of their continued association with the land of their independent history and of the lawgivers and prophets.*[23]

This association took many forms: spiritual, financial and physical. As Samuel Katz writes:

> *Every single day in all those 70 generations (of exile) devout Jews gave voice to their attachment to Zion... Jewish prayers, Jewish literature are saturated with the love and the longing for and sense of belonging to Palestine... Jewish festivals remained tuned to the circumstances and conditions of the Jewish homeland... In* (his) *home, on family occasions, in his daily customs, on weekdays and Shabbat, when he said grace over meals,... got married,... built his home, when he said words of comfort to mourners, the context was always his exile, his hope a belief in the return to Zion...*[24]

Under Roman, Byzantine, Muslim-Arab, Crusader, Mongol and Muslim Turkish rules, the Palestine Jewish community was not only supported with financial contributions but continually augmented by Jews immigrating from the lands of the Diaspora. "Modern Zionism did indeed start the count of the waves of immigration after 1882, but only the frame and the capacity for organization were new: the living movement to the land never ceased."[25] Some examples selected from the long history of the country corroborate this fact.

Already in the first century BCE, there was a synagogue of Cyrenian Jews in Jerusalem. Archaeological excavations at the necropolis of Beth Shearim give tangible evidence of how Jews from all over the Diaspora, including Yemen (Himyar), had their bodies sent for burial to the Holy Land. In the early 13th century, Yehuda Al-Harizi noted the large Maghrebi community in Jerusalem. Nachmanides, who settled in Jerusalem in 1267, where a coherent Jewish community existed uninterruptedly till 1948 in the Old City, wrote his son of the many pilgrims "who come frequently to Jerusalem, women and men from Damascus and Aleppo, and other areas to see (the site of) the Temple and to weep over it."[26]

In 1488–89, Obadiah of Bartinoro relates that Adenite Jews were in Jerusalem; Christian pilgrims Arnold van Harff and Martin Kabatnik reported a large Hebrew-speaking Jewish community in the city. Sixteenth century letters attest to the many Jewish pilgrims from Egypt and other countries – though conditions were crowded – who found room on the holidays. The last *Nagid* of Cairo Jewry, in fact, settled in Jerusalem with the Turkish conquest. At the beginning of Ottoman rule, there were 30 Jewish communities in the land, and some Jewish agricultural villages could claim 15 centuries of uninterrupted farming. Religious and commercial ties between Syrian and Palestinian Jewry – always close – were strengthened with the arrival of the Spanish Jewish refugees. Ties between Baghdad, Syria and Palestine were also strengthened. The Safad Kabbalists of this period had profound influence on the Jews of Yemen and on the Jews of Damascus – where Rabbi Hayyim Vital and Rabbi Moses Alsheikh lived for most of their lives.[27]

At the beginning of the 19th century, the communities of indigenous Jews whose ancestors had never known exile had dwindled to a single village. James Parkes writes:

> *There had grown up in its place a community accepting hardships and poverty, insecurity and danger, which represented almost all the Jewries of the world, eastern, Sephardic and Ashkenazic, which was supported in its need by all the Jewries of the world and which was regarded by Jews everywhere as peculiarly blessed because it lived upon the holy soil itself.*[28]

Aside from the spiritual, financial and physical ties described above, there is one more aspect of the bonds between Diaspora communities and Eretz Yisrael to be examined, i.e., the attempted returns.

Throughout the centuries, the sufferings of the Jews and their longing for redemption and sovereign existence in the land of their forefathers gave rise to false Messiahs who promised deliverance from oppression and a return to Zion. These movements characterized Middle Eastern as well as European Jewry. In 8th century Syria there was one; in 12th century Iraq there were at least three such movements. Similar movements arose in Yemen during the 11th, 12th, 17th and 19th century. The tales of David Hareubeni and Solomon Molcho, who visited Syria and Palestine (1523 and 1525), inspired ascetic preparations and immigration to Palestine from neighboring countries. The storm created by Shabbetai Zvi (1626–1716) swept through the Middle East as well as Europe and when proved false led to a degeneration of Jewish life there as well.[29]

[23] James Parkes, *A History of Palestine*, p. 173.
[24] S. Katz, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[26] H.Z. Hirschberg, *A Collection of Sources for the History of the Jews in the Middle East during the Middle Ages* (Heb.), pp. 12–13.
[27] *Ibid.*, Katz, *op. cit.*; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XV, p. 643.
[28] Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 175, 176, 178; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. XVI, pp. 742, 744.

Continuous Jewish presence is found in Palestine for over 33 centuries, and in the Middle East, North Africa and Arabia, for over 25 centuries. This presence must be understood in all its ramifications, in terms of the deep emotional and physical attachment to these lands: of 25 centuries of births, marriages, deaths, of communities founded, developed, abandoned by decree of exile or economic ruin; of homes, synagogues, schools, shops built and re-built after each pogrom and natural disaster; of trade routes plied; of legends, stories, songs, maxims about towns and localities; of commemorative festivals and unique cultural expressions, distinct food, dress and folklore – 25 centuries of communities of scholars, merchants, craftsmen, farmers, poets, physicians; communities, each representing years of productive Jewish labor and love, and contributions to successive governments; communities which established businesses, stores, printing presses, banks, whole branches of the economy.

It also means 25 centuries of Jews fighting side by side with non-Jews to defend these lands against invaders – with the Berbers against the Muslims in North Africa (7th–8th century), with the Muslims against the Crusaders, with the Turks against Napoleon, with Algerians against the Spanish (17th century) – and with their compatriots in World War I and World War II, with France and Britain, and even in struggles for the national liberation of the countries they lived in.

After twenty-five centuries of Jewish presence in these countries of the Middle East and North Africa, 95% of their Jewish communities have almost disappeared in one generation. This only proves, as will be described later, that during the last 1300 years the Arab world has resisted any attempt by Jews to be fully accepted in the Arab environment. Instead, the Jews were reminded periodically of their inferior status and legal place by measures of discrimination and violence taken against them, thus destroying any sense of equality or security which might have been expected to develop simply as a result of living together over 13 centuries.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Persecution of Jews in Arab Lands

Arab spokesmen have claimed that it was Zionism which disrupted the warm and amicable relations between Arabs and Jews, that, in short, the Jews "never had it so good" as under Muslim rule, till the State of Israel brought to a sudden end the centuries-long "interfaith utopia."[1] As Ahmad Shukeiry describes it:

> *Since God decreed their dispersion in the countries of the world, we have never heard that they were saved from harm and found a good life and security for themselves and their property anywhere except in the Islamic countries.... In every Muslim country, they enjoyed the protection of Islam and lived under its wing, safe, peaceful, free to trade, enjoying equality in all civil rights and not suffering from any oppression whatsoever.*[2]

This may be a very inspiring picture – but history proves it false.[3] It is true that the lot of Jews under medieval Muslim rule compares favorably with their condition in Christian countries. It is true that they enjoyed periods of great prosperity and cultural development. It is true that they were legally considered "protected subjects" of the Muslim rulers – but it was a "protection" honored as often as not in the breach.

As the distinguished Arabist von Grunebaum writes:

> *While it would not be difficult to catalog a significant quota of Jewish*

[1] Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 143.

[2] Quoted in Y. Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes toward Israel*, p. 218.

[3] James Parkes, *A History of Palestine*, p. 253: "It might indeed be said of the Turkish authorities that they exhibited the toleration of indifference when suitably paid to do so. But, apart from this, the legend of good treatment of the (Christian and) Jewish minorities has no support in the Muslim history of the last thousand years..." Distinguished scholars in the field have proved the point beyond doubt. See Morroe Berger, G.E. von Grunebaum and especially Bernard Lewis, "The Pro-Islamic Jews", *Judaism*, vol. 17, No. 4, p. 401, 1968. For more complete reference see Bibliography.

subjects who rose to a high rank in Islamic lands in places of power, in financial influence and in impressive and recognized intellectual achievements..., it will be just as easy to cite a long inventory of persecutions, arbitrary confiscations, attempts at forcible conversion and pogroms.[4]

Indeed, not only did Jews suffer oppression–including discrimination and pogroms which bring to mind the worst of medieval Christian Europe – their entire existence in lands under Muslim rule was based on sufferance, *not* rights, this despite the fact that Jews had lived in those lands long before the Islamic conquest. The Jews under Islam were a tolerated minority – and tolerance does not mean equality.[5] From the days of Muhammad on, the Quran and Islamic law emphasized and prescribed a status of inferiority for the Jews; their humiliation, in fact, was a condition of their retaining "protected" status and remaining alive in these lands.

What then are the roots of anti-Jewish discrimination in traditional Islam? We must begin with the founder of Islam, with Muhammad. The historical circumstances confronting Muhammad as he began to preach his new faith and to seek supporters molded his attitude toward the Jews – and that of his followers. By the 7th century CE, many influential and long-established Jewish tribes dwelt throughout Arabia.[6] Muhammad's admiration for the "People of the Book" who had received divine revelation in the Scriptures – expressed in his adoption of many Jewish traditions and practices – turned to active hostility when the Jews of Medina refused to accept the new faith. Between 625 and 627, Muhammad and his followers eradicated the Jewish tribes' opposition by completely exterminating the Banu Quraiza and driving out the Banu Nadhir and Banu Qainuqa.[7] This and other victories contributed to the growing power and prestige of Muhammad, who began to give the inherited Jewish and Christian customs a more Arabian flavor or to drop them entirely. "What emerged was thus an ambiguous attitude towards Jewry – the recognition of the adherents... as People of the Book and, at the same time,... hostile contempt towards (them) as unbelievers."[8]

In 628, the Muslims attacked the Jewish oasis of Khaibar. There the precedent was set for relations between Muslim authority and a conquered non-Muslim people: the Jews of Khaibar were allowed to retain their land but had to pay a 50% tribute. The Quranic expression of this is found in the injunction (Sura IX, 29): "Make war upon those who have been given the Scripture... until they pay tribute, being brought low", i.e., in a state of humiliation. As von Grunebaum stated, "Their personal safety and personal property are guaranteed them at the price of permanent inequality."[9] The tribute they paid as a mark of their

[4] G.E. von Grunebaum, "Eastern Jewry under Islam – Reflections on Medieval Anti-Judaism," *Viator*, vol. 2, 1971, quoted in Littman, D. – "Jews and Arabs – Myths and Realities," p. 4.
[5] Morroe Berger. *The Arab World*, p. 251.
[6] Bernard Lewis. *The Arabs In History*, pp. 31–32. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. II, p. 235.
[7] Siegfried Landshut, *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East*, p. 4.
[8] Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[9] von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, p. 178.

subordination developed into a yearly poll tax obligatory on all males over age 15, usually collected from a representative of the whole community (who received a slap in the face to remind him – and his brethren – of their inferior status) and a kind of property tax. The poll tax "could be crushing and the property tax could amount to expropriation. To this the ruler could always add supplementary taxes for the support of his army not to speak of goodwill gifts that the weak paid to those in power."[10]

The inferior position of the Jews was reinforced by subsequent legislation, enacted as early as the eighth century, codified in the eleventh and known as the Covenant of 'Umar. It comprised a series of regulations designed to separate Muslims from non-Muslims and guard the superiority of the former through the humiliation of the latter. Observance of these regulations was the price paid by the non-Muslim "people of the Covenant" called *dhimmis*, for living under Muslim rule. What did these regulations demand?

On pain of death, Jews, as *dhimmis*, were forbidden to revile the Quran, Islam or Muhammad, to marry Muslim women, to proselytize among Muslims, to injure Muslims in life or property, to assist the enemy or to harbor spies. They were, in addition – and with slightly less grievous penalties attached – forbidden to build houses higher than Muslims, to ride horses (and later mules, too), to drink wine in public and to pray, mourn or bury their dead with loud voices or in a way which might be offensive to Muslims; and they had to wear distinctive clothing or distinguishing colored patches. Their public behavior, their outer appearance, the very structure of their homes were to reflect their inferiority and reinforce it.[11] Moreover, the *dhimmis* were forbidden to bear arms; their oath was invalidated by a Muslim's and not accepted in a Muslim court; and the blood price demanded for the death of a *dhimmi* was almost always less than that of a Muslim.[12]

Thus the very nature of this ambiguity in Islam made it "the only religion in the world with an inherent hostility towards the adherents of other beliefs."[13]

The Covenant of 'Umar reflected as well as determined actual practice of discrimination against Jews. We know from a contemporary document that Jews in 7th century Egypt were already forced to wear special signs on their clothing.[14]

Moreover, once the Covenant of 'Umar's discriminatory requirements became law – they were only a precedent for further elaboration. "The severity of the laws against the *dhimmis* depended on the degree and manner in which they were enforced. When the Muslim ruler was liberal minded and understanding, the laws were bearable; when the ruler was tyrannical and cruel, the status of the *dhimmi* was that of a virtual slave."[15] Clothing restrictions, for example, were not

[10] Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, p. 47.
[11] Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Nehemiah Robinson, *The Arab Countries of the Near East and their Jewish Communities*, pp. 50–51.
[12] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[13] Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[14] J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine*, pp. 13–14, quoted in Yahudiya Masriya, *Les Juifs en Egypte*, p. 14.
[15] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.

uniform; the heights of ludicrousness – and humiliation for the wearer – to which these laws reached were dependent only on the whim and cruelty of the Muslim ruler. El-Mutawakkil (847–861) ordered Jews to wear yellow clothing, ropes instead of a belt (the latter considered a mark of honor), put colored buttons on their turbans, and then (850) to wear yellow patches on the front and back of their outer garments centuries before this custom was introduced in Europe.[16] El-Hakim (1004) compelled the Jews to wear first, a wooden image of the Golden Calf, then wooden balls, then six-pound blocks around their necks in the streets and baths of Cairo.[17] Fatimid Khalif al-Mustansir (1086) ordered Jews to wear black belts with yellow fringes;[18] Mamlūk rulers decreed that they wear yellow turbans only (1301)[19] and (in 1363) different color shoes.[20] In the same century, Moroccan Jews had to put on black slippers;[21] in the 19th century they were forbidden to wear shoes at all when leaving the Jewish quarter.[22] In 20th century Yemen, the "most Arabic of the Arab countries,"[23] Jews were forbidden (1905) to wear bright colored garments or to use stockings;[24] Yemenite Jewish women were already wearing one white and one black shoe.[25]

What was the practical outcome of these decrees – their toll in human life, dignity and property – through the countries and centuries of Muslim rule?

Despite the alleged "protection" Islam afforded "its" Jews, it will not be hard to list instances of Muslim murders or massacres of Jews, though actual numbers of casualties have not always been preserved in sources. In Morocco alone in the 8th century, for example, whole communities were wiped out by Idris I;[26] in the 11th century 6,000 Jews of Fez were massacred (1033) by a ruler who declared persecution of the Jews legal;[27] when Fez was again the scene of mass murder of Jews in the 15th century, only 11 Jews were left alive;[28] between the years 1864 and 1880, in Marrakesh, more than 300 Jews were murdered.[29] In 1776, Basra Jews were despoiled and slaughtered.[30] The Jews of Algiers were massacred in 1805, 1815 and 1830;[31] the Jews of Mostaganem in 1897.[32] The 12th century tide of terror spread throughout North Africa by the Almohads, a fanatical Muslim

[16] Yahudiya Masriya, *op. cit.*, p. 15. Ben-Yaakov, *Kitzur Toldot Yehudai Bavel*, pp. 59–60.
[17] Yahudiya Masriya, *op. cit.*, p. 19. *Ency. Jud.*, vol. XV, p. 640.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 19. Saul Friedman. "The Myth of Arab Tolerance" in *Midstream*, January 1970, p. 58
[19] Lane-Poole. *History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, p. 301.
[20] E. Ashtor. *Toldot Hayehudim be'Mizraim u'v'Suria*, vol. I, p. 321.
[21] World Jewish Congress, *The Jews of French Morocco and Tunisia*, p. 7.
[22] Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, p. 119.
[23] Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, p. 74.
[24] Hayyim J. Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East* (Heb.), pp. 63–64.
[25] Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[26] Israel Museum, *Hayei Hayehudim B'Morocco*, p. 8. Harari, *Toldot Yehudai Al-Maghreb* pp. 35–36.
[27] Israel Museum, *Hayei Hayehudim B'Morocco*, pp. 9–10.
[28] Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews of North Africa* (Heb.), vol. I, p. 291.
[29] Martin Gilbert, *The Jews under Arab and Muslim Rule*, map of Morocco.
[30] Ben-Yaakov, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
[31] *Ency. Jud.*, vol. II, p. 615.
[32] Information Briefing No. 19, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

sect that gave "infidels" the choice between Islam and death, and led to the destruction of Fez and Tlemcen Jewry; many other communities –like Meknes, Ceuta, Fraa, Sijilmassa – were decimated or forcibly converted. Later legislation forced the new converts to wear humiliating garb and undermined the economic basis of the remaining Jews.[33] Through the centuries, "the Jews were easy prey for a population embroiled in inter-tribal and inter-dynastic warfare. Usually unarmed, they were at the mercy of the mob eager for rape and pillage. Every change of regime, every famine or epidemic, every incident, no matter how small, was likely to mark an outburst of gory uprisings against the Jews."[34] Muslim religious holidays were also occasionally used as an opportunity for attacking the Jews. In late 18th century Egypt a German traveller notes that the holiday of Ramadan was marked by delirious fanaticism and considered incomplete unless at least one non-Muslim was killed. In Iraq, till 1950, Jews were forbidden to smoke in the streets during Ramadan. The fall – by intrigue or assassination – of a Jew in high office[35] usually meant anywhere from a few days to a few months of murder and pillaging of his unhappy coreligionists (as in Morocco, 1465 and in Algiers, 1805).[36]

Destruction and seizure by Muslims of Jewish property (homes and shops, synagogues and revered tombs) were even more common than murder and physical attacks. Decrees ordering the destruction of synagogues were frequently promulgated in Egypt and Syria (as in 1014, 1293–4, 1301–2),[37] Iraq (as in 854–859, 1344)[38] and Yemen (1676).[39] A law prohibiting the construction of new synagogues or the repair of old ones could always be used as a pretext and precedent for such action.[40] Heavy taxes were often imposed specifically on the Jews (Iraq 809[41], Morocco 1790[42]), and the *jizya* (poll tax) doubled (Iraq 859),[43] while Ali Bey effected the complete financial ruin of Cairo Jewry within three years (1768–1771) by extorting over 255,000 tallars from them.[44] A predecessor, Qaid Bey (1468–1495), had extorted 75,000 pieces of gold from Egypt's Jews.[45] It would be hard to say that the Jews, even when they "kept their place", were always granted the protection of Islam. In 1801, the Qaid of Boghni promised his soldiers "eight times their pay, white bread and the right to sack the Jews for 4 days."[46] A description of the situation of the Jews in the remote mountainous

[33] Chouraqui, *Between East and West*, pp. 51–2. *Ency. Jud.* vol. II, p. 612.
[34] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
[35] Walter Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Medieval Islam*, p. XV.
[36] *Ency. Jud.* vol. II, p. 615 and *Hayei Hayehudim B'Morocco*, p. 10.
[37] *Encly. Jud.* vol. XV, p. 640. Yahudiya Masriya, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Ashtor, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 258–259.
[38] Ben-Yaakov, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60 and p. 81.
[39] *Ency. Jud.*, vol. XVI, p. 743.
[40] Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 50. Yahudiya Masriya, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
[41] Ben Yaakov, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[42] Israel Museum, *Hayei Hayehudim B'Morocco*, p. 11.
[43] Ben Yaakov, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
[44] Yahudiya Masriya, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[46] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

areas of North Africa is also revealing. "Every Jew... belongs, body and assets, to his lord, his *sid*... The *sid* protects his Jews against strangers in the same way as everybody defends what he owns... He takes them to the market himself, puts them up for auction and sells them... The Jews are robbed, their homes are destroyed, they are chased away with their families. Villages can be seen with an entire deserted quarter in them, and the surprised passerby learns that there was a *mellah* here and that the *sids* by common consent turned against their Jews one day and drove them out. Nothing in the world can protect an Israelite against his lord, he is at his mercy."[47] In the cities, the Jews were not better off. A 19th century traveller writes: "The Israelite merchants are endlessly subjected to a most ruinous system of plunder. Customs tariffs are arbitrarily doubled, tripled or even multiplied tenfold, without any hope of obtaining justice from higher authority."[48]

And since the testimony of a Jew was inadmissible in a Muslim court and his oath invalidated by a Muslim's[49] – the Jew could scarcely hope for redress for the attacks and accusations he suffered. A constant threat and source of particular insecurity for Jews under Muslim rule was the accusation that a Jew had blasphemed Islam or Muhammad – a crime punishable by death. Even under the enlightened rule of Muhammad Bey, an innocent Tunisian Jew, Batto Sfez, was executed on the basis of just such an accusation (1857). The first instance *ever* in Syria of a Muslim executed for the murder of a Jew occurred in 1869 and, writes the English consular agent in Damascus, "the Muslims, considering themselves much degraded by being placed on an equal footing even, as they say, with the Jews,... have betrayed a feeling of repressed rage."[50]

How did the centuries of arbitrary treatment and reinforced second-class status – institutionalized degradation – affect the Jews?

"The humiliations that accompanied the status of *dhimmi* were accepted by the Jews as inescapable realities of life – ...the customary degradations, the blows administered in passing, the deliberate jostling, the swallowed insults."[51] Arminius Vambery is even less ambiguous: "I do not know of any more miserable, helpless and pitiful individual on God's earth than the Yahudi in those countries... The poor Jew is despised, belabored, and tortured by Muslims, Christians and Brahmins alike, he is the poorest of the poor."[52]

That the Jews in Muslim lands were often able, despite their precarious and humiliating status, to develop and maintain a lively culture and contribute to their environment is a tribute to their tenaciousness and unquenchable spirit and to occasional periods of less stringent application of the Covenant of 'Umar and its

[47] *Ibid.* p. 118.

[48] Joseph Halevy, quoted in S. Schwarzfuchs, "Persecution of Jews in the Lands of Islam" (from *L'Arche*, December 1973), p. 9.

[49] Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 50. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, p. 72.

[50] C. Wood to Elliot, F-O. 195/927 No. 16, Damascus, Oct. 1, 1869, in Ma'oz, *Mekorot Letoldot Yehudai Suria v Eretz Israel Bameah Ha-19*, pp. 46–50.

[51] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[52] *The Story of My Struggles*, p. 395, quoted in Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 3.

variations under moderate Muslim rulers; but the myth of that golden "interfaith Utopia" is just a myth.

Arab oppression of Jews is not, *therefore, a post-1948 phenomenon. It is rooted in Islam and has been an inescapable characteristic of the relations between Arabs and Jews since Muhammad's time. 20th century Arab persecution of Jews is only a continuation and intensification of this centuries-long tradition, in which the socially and religiously inferior Jew bore the brunt of the Muslim masses' contempt and the Muslim governments' arbitrary policies and financial troubles.*

There is a difference, however, in the Arabs' attitude toward the Jews in Muslim Arab countries – as elsewhere – since the Balfour Declaration recognized the rights of Jews to a national home in their ancestral land. The Declaration led to ever more systematic and vicious persecution. "Zionism, and especially the creation of a modern Jewish state within this area, was the last but probably most powerful lever for anti-Jewish animosity..."[53] Before the rise of Zionism and the growth of the Yishuv in Palestine, the Arabs had generally recognized the right of Jews living under their rule to life, livelihood and the practice of religion – though only under the conditions and restrictions the Arabs imposed.[54] Their attitude was one of derision, at worst contempt, the attitude of masters toward their slaves.[55] The modern Muslim Arab regimes – notably Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Libya – have systematically undermined the Jews' means of earning a livelihood by restricting the types of jobs they can be trained for or occupy and by instituting boycotts of Jewish establishments and professional people; they have practically destroyed Jewish religious and communal life by restricting its organizational activities and demolishing or confiscating its buildings – schools, synagogues, communal institutions; and they have again – especially in Syria and Iraq – engaged in the taking of Jewish lives, whether by public execution on trumped-up charges or by condoning murder, torture and rape of Jews in streets, homes and jails. All of this is accompanied by virulent anti-Jewish hate campaigns in the often government-controlled press and mass media.[56]

This did not all happen at once. How did it begin? And how did it finally assume such proportions that 96% of "Arab Jews" were forced to leave these lands where their ancestors had lived for over 2500 years, often at the risk of their lives and in forfeiture of all their material possessions?

The Government of Iraq began to take specifically anti-Jewish steps practically from the moment of its independence; in 1934 the teaching of Hebrew was

[53] Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

[54] Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

[55] H.E.W. Young, British Vice Consul in Mosul (1909). *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. VII, (1971) p. 232. "The attitude of the Moslems towards the Christians and Jews is that of a master towards slaves whom he treats with a certain lordly tolerance so long as they keep their place. Any sign of pretension to equality is promptly repressed."

[56] "The sharpening of the conflict since 1948 has been accompanied by an increase in manifestations of anti-Semitism in literature and press" (Harkabi, *op. cit.*, p. 229). "Since the creation of the State of Israel, anti-Semitic propaganda has not needed to be imported from Europe" (Berger, *The Arab World*, p. 262).

prohibited and students' entry into high schools and univesities restricted. Jews began to be dismissed from certain government positions. Physical attacks on Jews in Baghdad – including murders – became frequent from 1936 on; anti Jewish propaganda was spread by an openly pro-Nazi and anti-Zionist regime. The tension and "shadowy persecution" erupted into violence in other cities too, where local Muslim leaders used the opportunity to extort money from the Jews. During the 1st and 2nd June 1941, on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost, armed and incited mobs, with full government knowledge, attacked Jews and Jewish property throughout Baghdad. 170–180 Jews were butchered to death, hundreds were wounded; 14,500 sustained material losses. Police and army joined the rioters and looters.[57]

From 1936 to 1939 Syria served as the headquarters of the Palestine Arab High Command and its anti-Jewish propaganda center; the propaganda was intensified after a 1937 visit of Nazi officers. From 1938 on, anti-Jewish demonstrations and attacks, including fatal stabbings of Jews in the streets of Damascus, became more and more frequent; in 1944, the Jewish quarter was twice attacked by mobs.[58]

In Egypt, certain nationalist parties began to lobby for a boycott against the Jews in 1938; in July 1939, bombs were discovered in three Cairo synagogues (before they exploded) wrapped with warnings to the Jews not to support their coreligionists in Palestine.[59]

"From 1933 onwards, the spread of anti-Jewish propaganda among the Arabs was no longer left to chance or to private enterprise. Nazi Germany made a truly immense effort in the Arab countries and won many converts. This work was continued by Nazi émigrés after the war."[60] In 1934, Nazi-inspired anti-Semitic incitement led directly to the pogrom in Constantine, Algeria, which left 25 dead, scores injured and homes, shops and property pillaged.[61]

Between the end of World War II and 1948, the situation of Jews in Arab lands dramatically worsened.During the war, the ever-vulnerable Jews had suffered from Vichy legislation in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Syria and from Axis occupations of Tunisia and Libya. In 1945, the year that saw the founding of the Arab League, in Egypt, there were mass anti-Jewish riots in Libya accompanied by plundering of Jewish homes, shops, synagogues and communal buildings. In Tripolitania 131 Jews were slaughtered and hundreds wounded; the riots spread to other towns as well. In Syria, where the campaign of terror against the Jews was gaining momentum, Muslim religious leaders telegraphed Allied leaders threatening a Holy War against the Jews if immigration to Palestine were not stopped.[62] In June, the assistant headmaster of the Alliance school in Damascus

[57] Hayyim J. Cohen, *The Jews of the Middle East* (Heb.), pp. 33-35.
[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[60] Lewis, *Islam in History*, pp. 144.
[61] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

was murdered.[63] In November of the same year, a mob broke into the Great Synagogue in Aleppo.

When, in 1947, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Muhammad Fadhil Bey al-Jamali, told the UN Committee on Palestine that the fate of the Jews in Muslim countries was dependent on developments in Palestine, he was only stating what was already accepted in practice. The Egyptian delegate to the UN, Haykhal Pasha, declared on November 24, 1947, that Arab governments would do their best to protect the Jews, but, he added ominously, "We are all aware that mob fury is often stronger than the police."[64] The *N.Y. Times* of November 25, 1947, reported him as saying, "The United States, which has not been able altogether to suppress outbursts of racial passion in the form of lynching, will appreciate that with the best will in the world the Near Eastern governments might not be able to control the infuriated Muslims."

The Syrian delegate, Faris al-Khuri, was more direct, warning that, "unless the Palestine problem is settled, we shall have difficulty in protecting and safeguarding the Jews in the Arab world" (*N.Y. Times*, 19 Feb. 1947). These threats were not empty ones. On one hand, with the Arab press "fulminating against the perfidy of Zionism" and on the other, Arab politicians mobilizing the masses to the point of hysteria, the situation was beyond control.[65]

In December of the same year, in Aleppo, an unknown number of Jews were butchered to death by mobs that burned four big synagogues, 14 smaller ones and destroyed 150 homes. Damage was estimated at $2.5 million.[66] Prior to this, the death penalty was imposed for emigration to Palestine, the Jewish community was forced to proclaim its opposition to Zionism and Jews were arrested and tortured by police for no apparent reason. "All this was accompanied by governmental restrictions on the movement of Jews, denial of government jobs, withholding of licenses, making virtually impossible admission to schools, prohibiting acquisition of land or the opening of commercial establishments, engaging in any trade or disposing of property."[67] The Jews of Syria were completely paralyzed, isolated and terrified.

This pattern marked the beginning of the end of Jewish communities not only in Syria, but also in other Arab lands. In December 1947, in Aden, a bloody pogrom left 82 dead, more wounded, 110 shops out of 170 looted and burned, and the remaining Jews with only the remnants of a community - two Jewish schools, 4 synagogues, 220 homes. The community was in shock and their means of livelihood were wiped out within three days.[68]

In 1948, with the proclamation of the State of Israel and the Arab armies' invasion of the new State, the following measures were taken against Jews in several Arab countries. On 14 and 15 May, 1948, in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, Jews were

[63] Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.
[68] Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 13. The locally-raised police force took part in the looting and rioting.

arrested, interrogated and beaten. On 30 May, 1948, Egyptian authorities began the sequestration of Jewish property and forced Jews in Cairo and Alexandria to contribute £E. 40,000 + £E. 60,000 respectively to the Arab war fund. This was followed by other Arab countries: in Damascus and Baghdad Jews were compelled to give £40,000 and 500,000 Dinars respectively. Furthermore several Arab countries restricted the movement of Jews, especially emigration–in Egypt: 25 May and 26 July 1948; in Iraq: 15 May, 1948; in Syria: mid-1947. Despite government warnings and precautions, bloody riots broke out in June 1948 against the Jews in Oujda and Djerada in Morocco. In Oujda, within three hours, five Jews had been killed, 30 seriously injured, shops and homes sacked. In Djerada, the Jewish population of 100 suffered 39 deaths and 30 severely wounded, the remainder less seriously.[69] An unofficial popular economic boycott against Morocco's Jews was begun. A few days later, the Jewish quarter, the *hara*, in Tripoli was attacked; "Muslim gangs poured through,... killing young and old, women and children, hacking to pieces the bodies of their victims".[70] On 20 June, the Jewish quarter of Cairo was shaken by explosions which left 34 dead and 60 injured; four blocks of Jewish-occupied tenements lay in rubble. From then on, bomb explosions occurred in July, September, October and November, leaving at least 38 dead, 137 injured and much Jewish property destroyed, including large department stores. Attacks and rape of Jews in the streets went on for a week while Egyptian security forces did nothing; only repeated foreign protests and threats compelled the government to bring the rioting to an end.[71] In Iraq, aside from dismissing Jews from all government departments and prohibiting Jewish banks to transact with foreign countries, the government left the anti-Jewish campaign to the police and the military, who took full advantage of their opportunities for blackmail. Many Jews were arrested for "Zionist activities" (including the possession of a map of the Holy Land in a Bible) or "economic crimes". The fines from these "crimes" were paid to the Ministry of Defence and used by the government to finance its war effort. The execution of a Jewish millionaire by courtmartial sentence enriched the Government by $5,000,000.[72] Iraqi Jews were permitted to leave the country within a year provided they forfeited their citizenship (Law No. 1, dated 3 March, 1950). However, on 10 March, 1951, Law No. 5 was adopted freezing the property of those Jews who emigrated. A few days later, heavy economic restrictions and penalties were imposed on Jews who chose to remain in the country and retain their citizenship.[73]

As the Arab countries of North Africa began to receive their independence, the Jews – who had suffered in the often bloody struggles which preceded it – began to be squeezed out of the economy, replaced and boycotted by the Muslims.[74] The new governments' ties with the Arab League and their policies of islamization and

[69] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–182.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 182.
[71] Landshut, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–38.
[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–51.
[73] Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–67.
[74] J. Schechtman, *On Wings of Eagles*, pp. 316–317.

nationalization left no place for ethnically distinct and economically active Jewish communities.[75] Rabbinical tribunals and community councils were dissolved in the name of "national unity" (Iraq, 1958; Syria, December 1949; Egypt, 1960; Tunisia, July 1958; Libya, 1958); ancient synagogues, cemeteries, and Jewish quarters were destroyed for urban renewal (Tunisia 1958). When Libya became independent in 1951, she forced her Jews to sever their ties with Israel and Jewish organizations abroad; in 1963, their right to vote was rescinded, postal ties with Israel cut and they were forbidden to hold public office.[76]

The Six-Day War marked another turning point in the deteriorating situation of the Jews in Arab countries. The War itself set off anti-Jewish riots in Tunisia, Algeria, Libya (where they were especially bloody) and Aden;[77] these and the growing hatred for the Jews in Morocco caused many to flee to Israel, Europe and the Americas. In Egypt there were mass arrests of Jews, including the sick and the elderly, some of whom were not released until 1970, after three years of torture and degradation. Some were released directly from jail to the airport, given 30 minutes to bid farewell to their families, made to sign a renunciation of all property and of their citizenship and expelled, taking only their personal belongings along.[78] In Syria and in Iraq, the war also meant mass arests, torture, growing insecurity and virulent governmental anti-Jewish campaigns, praising the persecution and murder of the Jews, taking out their anger at being defeated on their helpless Jewish hostages. Muslim religious leaders also gave legitimization to the extermination of Jews in Arab countries in the name of Islam. At the World Islamic Congress (Amman, Jordan, 22 September 1967) it was resolved:

> *Jews in Arab Countries: The Congress is certain that the Jewish communities living in Islamic countries do not appreciate the Moslems' good treatment and protection over the centuries.... The Congress declares that the Jews residing in Arab countries who contact the Zionist circles or the State of Israel do not deserve the protection and care which Islam provides for the free non-Moslem subjects living in Islamic countries. Moslem Islamic Governments should treat them as aggressive combatants. Similarly, the Islamic peoples, individually and collectively, should boycott them and treat them as deadly enemies.*[79]

As early as 1950, 'Ismat, an Arab author, had warned, "Let no one advise us to exonerate from Zionism the Jews in the Arab countries who pretend to be innocent, no matter how wretched and degraded they appear to be, for they are Zionists like the rest of the Jews of the world... If they conceal their Zionism for a while, they will reveal it at a suitable opportunity... They are nothing but a fifth

[75] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, pp. 281–284.
[76] Ma'ariv and W.J.C., *Hakehillot Hayehudiot Ba-'Olam*, p. 44.
[77] *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 12, 44, 54.
[78] Dafna Alon. *Arab Racialism*, p. 76; *International Conference for the Deliverance of Jews in the Middle East*, pp. 32, 67, 79.
[79] Students' Committee for Human Rights in the Middle East, *Persecution of Jews in Arab Lands*, p. 11.

column in every country."[80] This theme of Jews as a fifth column was picked up by governments and media[81] after the Six-Day War and used to legitimize the dismissals, persecutions, arrests and executions of the Jews remaining in Arab countries such as the hangings in Iraq in January and August 1969.

Since 1967, even more stringent restrictions have been in force, especially in Syria and Iraq. In Syria the impoverished community has not been allowed to own telephones, send mail to the outside world, or move more than 3 kilometres from their homes. Palestinian terrorists and secret police have been moved into the Jewish quarter where they have harassed, attacked and raped the Jews with impunity. In Aleppo, an Arab whose brother had fallen in the '73 war entered the home of a Jew and shot him to death before his family; the murderer, who is well-known, has not been arrested. A government boycott of Jewish merchants has been in effect since 1967; Jewish doctors and tradesmen are allowed to deal only with Jews. Jews are allowed an education only in schools run and staffed by Muslims; there is no future for the youth.[82]

In Iraq, the Jewish community was also economically paralyzed, unable to withdraw more than a small sum each month, under constant surveillance - politically, physically and mentally crippled. An Iraqi Jew (who escaped) wrote in his diary in February 1970: "Ulcer, heart attacks and breakdowns are increasingly prevalent among the Jews... The dehumanization of the Jewish personality resulting from continuous humiliation and torment... have dragged us down to the lowest level of our physical and mental faculties, and deprived us of the power to recover."[83] Recently, the government decided to allow Jews over 65 or under 15 years to emigrate – on payment of an exit tax of £1,500 a person; few can afford this. Cases of murder of Jews have been reported. As in Syria, the Jews are allowed no contact with the outside world.[84]

In June 1967, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 237, which empowered the Secretary-General to send a special Representative to the Middle East with the task of inquiring into the welfare of civilians in the wake of the war. U Thant informed the Representative, Dr. Nils Gussing of Sweden, that this included investigation of treatment of Jewish minorities in Arab countries as well as Arabs in Israeli-occupied territory. Egypt, Syria and Iraq *refused* to allow that first mission – or a second one in April 1968 – to include their countries in the investigation.[85]

[80] 'Abd al-Rahman Sami 'Ismat, *al-Sahyuniyya wa-al-Masuniyya* (Arabic), (*Zionism and Freemasonry*), pp. 49–59.
[81] Students' Committee for Human Rights in the Middle East, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12.
[82] Ministry of Education and Culture, *Métzukat Hayehudim B'Artzot Arav*, p. 11.
[82] Max Sawdayee, *All Waiting to Be Hanged*, p. 115.
[84] Ma'ariv and W.J.C., *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[85] Students' Committee for Human Rights in the Middle East, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6.

CONCLUSION

"Even though the Jews of the Middle East belong to the area as much as the Muslims themselves, the domination of the latter has never allowed them to exist in conditions of anything better than toleration within the framework of discrimination."[86] Jews were considered at the very bottom of the ladder, or, as designated in literary sources, *asfal al-safilin*, the lowest of the low.

Yet, relations between Muslims and Jews could be friendly and cordial. Partnerships were formed and business transacted – indeed, in some areas, the two groups were mutually dependent. The Jews often played an important role in the various countries' economies and in some cases in the political life. Food and dress, customs and beliefs were also shared to a great extent – even certain revered saints' tombs were sometimes venerated in common. Muslim rulers and religious leaders – who were the source of the humiliating decrees and the instigators of anti-Jewish violence or destruction of property – sometimes went to great lengths to protect "their" Jews. But the legacy and legal framework of discrimination were there. The Covenant of 'Umar regulations which inspired all successive Muslim legislation down to modern times "aimed to convince every Muslim that the Jew was part of some unimportant sub-species that it was necessary to accept and respect to a certain degree in order to remain faithful to the teaching of the Prophet."[87]

During the twelve centuries of Muslim domination, the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East suffered massacres, forced conversions, arbitrary confiscations and taxation, attacks, accusations, humiliating legislation and the contempt of the Muslim masses as a result of their inferior and precarious status; yet they did not disappear. According to Bernard Lewis: "The position of the Jews... under traditional Muslim rule certainly fell a long way short of the inter-faith utopia imagined by modern romanticists and apologists, but it was one which enabled them to survive and at times to flourish."[88] "Recent Arab persecutions of the Jews, however, finding legitimization in Islam, fired by xenophobic nationalism, and nourished by intensive and eclectic anti-Semitic propaganda, have made it impossible for Jews to survive – much less flourish – in most Muslim countries."[89] "...The old tolerance has gone, the new equality has proved a fraud."[90] In certain countries the regimes were directly responsible for the dissemination of inflammatory propaganda and for the deterioration of the political, economic and social position of the Jews, who found themselves the

[86] Landshut, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
[87] Chouraqui, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[88] Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 165.
[89] "During the last twenty years a vast anti-Jewish – not merely anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli – literature has appeared in the Arab countries, in which racial, theological and demonological themes, as well as political arguments are used." ...Lewis, *ibid.*, p. 317. "Religious motives are exploited to strengthen and deepen the hatred of Israel and the Jews..." Harkabi, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
[90] Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

object of increasing restrictions and vilification and suffered from frequent and vicious attacks by the incited mobs.

Even in those few countries where the government was sympathetic, it could not guarantee the Jews complete security from mob attacks or from nationalization and economic reforms which left little place for them. The Jews also saw what was happening to other non-Muslim, non-Arab minority groups in the independent Arab states. "The very first year of Iraq's full sovereignty was marked by a massacre of the Assyrians (1933)... This was followed by expeditions against the Kurds and the persecution of the small Yezedi people who for centuries had lived in the mountains of northern Iraq."[91] The half-million Kurds in Syria have since 1962 suffered many disabilities.

European settlers had been the object of anti-foreigner riots in Egypt as early as the 19th century. Even native Arab Christians could write that "they have no future in a country which is becoming all the time more socialistic and totalitarian. Their children are indoctrinated in the schools, where the syllabus is devoted more and more to Islam and their faith is in danger. Debarred increasingly from public office... robbed of the property of their parents and unable to engage in profitable business... how can they survive?"[92]

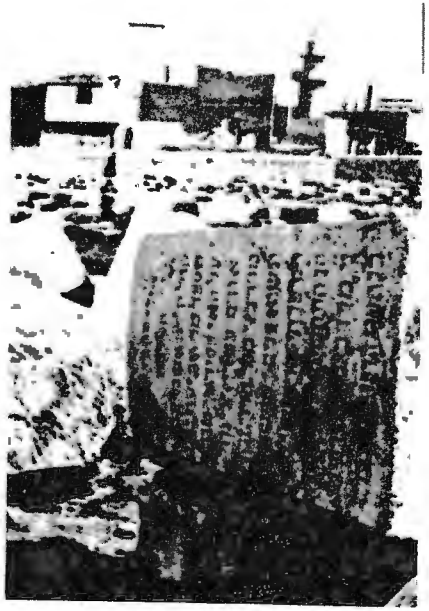
According to Arnold Toynbee, since 1959 between 500,000 and 600,000 non-Muslim Negroes of the Southern Sudan have been slaughtered by the Muslim Arabs of the North (with the help of Egypt) in a "colonialist" attempt "to impose themselves, their religion, language and culture on a non-Arab African people that wants to be itself and does not want to bé dominated."[93] Minorities in the Muslim Arab countries are in danger or – at best – in a difficult position.

For the Jews, however, the intensification of Arab persecution and developing Arab nationalism coincided with the re-establishment of Jewish autonomy in the Jewish people's ancient homeland. The Jews in Arab countries knew full well that "no Muslim state, however 'liberal' it would like to be,... could so depart from the line of conduct followed in the past and... pursued at present, as to allow its Jews anything but a status of 'protection' forever... and in no way a status of integration..."[94] These Jews, in some cases faced with expulsion or economic, social, political – and physical – extinction, finally had somewhere they could escape to; uprooted from the lands of their birth, they could return to the land of their forefathers. Within a generation, these communities have all but disappeared. The handfull of Jews left in Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Libya are suffering a slow death-in-life, as hostages of the governments, and scapegoats for the inequalities of the regimes and the ire of the incited masses.

[91] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[92] Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[93] Israel Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information Brief no. 213, 19.9.75, p. 2.
[94] Georges Vajdia. Quoted in Littman, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 9.

Two of the nine Jews hung in Liberation Square, Baghdad on January 28, 1969, to the delight of cheering crowds.

Detail of burned Ark from the *Grand Synagogue* of Benghazi, Libya, desecrated by mobs during anti-Jewish riots on June 16, 1948.



The desecration of a Jewish cemetery in Damascus, Syria, one of the many acts of violation of Jewish property and sacred places.

A Jew from Tunis at the turn of the century.

Members of Jewish Community Council in Tripoli, Libya, 1908. From right to left: Mr H. Hassan, Mr. S. Naim, Rabbi Ṣion Tzror, Rabbi Eliyahu Raccah (Haham Bashi), Mr. S. Genah, Rabbi David Ghinnish, Mr. E. Tzror and Mr. S. Rubin.

Rabbis Uzziel and Maimon on a mission to the Jewish Community in Baghdad, 1927. Sitting: Rav Maimon, Rav Sasson Khaddouri, Rav Uzziel, Rav Ezra Dangoor, Mr. Cohen, Secretary to Rabbis Uzziel and Maimon, Kedouri Sasson; standing: Dr. Anour Ini, Eliyahu Ini, Menashe Avraham George, Attorney Joseph Elias, a guard.

A Jewess from Tangier, Morocco, in traditional dress.

A *ma'abara* (transit camp) near Tiberias, 1951, showing tin huts which housed thousands of Jews from Arabs countries upon their arrival in Israel.

An immigrant from Egypt building his home in Ashdod, May 1950.

PART TWO

Jewish homes which were destroyed during the anti-Jewish riots in Aden in April, 1949.

A Syrian Leader Admits to the Responsibility of Arab States for The Palestine Refugee Problem

Since 1948 it is we who demanded the return of the refugees to their country, while it is we who made them leave it. Between the invitation extended to the refugees and the request to the United Nations to decide upon their return, there elapsed only a few months.

Is this wise and established policy? Is this the coordination in planning? We brought disaster upon one million Arab refugees, by inviting them and bringing pressure to bear upon them to leave their land, their homes, their work and their industry. We have rendered them dispossessed, unemployed, whilst everyone of them had work or a trade by which he could gain his livelihood. We have accustomed them to begging and to contenting themselves with the little which is distributed to them by the United Nations. We have participated in lowering their moral and social level by housing tens of women and men in one hall with nothing but a curtain separating one family's bed from another family's bed. No one is thus protected from vices. Then we exploited them in executing crimes of murder, arson, and throwing bombs upon houses and vehicles carrying men, women and children – all this in the service of political purposes in Lebanon and Jordan. Some of them became so accustomed to crime that their thirst for it is never quenched. Some of them are engaged in murder and house burglary. Some of them have so despaired of life that they consider it easy to lie and to swindle and allow themselves to cheat and to rob their partners in business and in agricultural work – those merciful persons who wanted, because of pity for this people, to associate them in their business and work... Their jealousy of those living in comfort, similar to the comfort which they left in their country (of origin), vies in their hearts with their hatred for the Jews. The sentiments of humanity, pity and mercy abandoned their hearts because they became needy of it. If anyone behaved mercifully towards them they consider him as paying part of what is due to them, and they are not thankful to him. No wonder in all this, after the calamities which they endured in fleeing their father-land, in the degradation of begging, in the contempt of living as a yoke upon a stranger.

Extract from:
Khaled El-Azm, former Prime Minister of Syria, *Memoirs* (Arabic) *Mudha-karat Khaled El-Azm*, 3 volumes (Al-Dar al Muttahida lil-Nashr), Vol. 1, pp. 386 7. (Beirut, 1973).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Movement of Refugee Populations

HOW MANY ARAB REFUGEES?

To this day controversy exists over the exact number of Arab refugees. The figures cited most often range between 500,000 and 1,500,000 depending on who is reporting the statistics. This unusually large discrepancy is best explained by the fact that an official census was never permitted by Arab administrators in charge of refugee camps.[1]

Nevertheless, most reliable sources list the Arab refugee figure for 1948 as between 500,000 and 650,000. A case in point is the report of the Hon. Terence Prittie, who wrote that the maximum number of Arab refugees in 1948 was 590,000.[2] The Economic Survey Mission set up in 1949 by the Conciliation Committee for Palestine reported 726,000 recorded refugees.[3] To arrive at the actual number of genuine refugees this figure should have been reduced by at least 100,000 who were fraudulently recorded as refugees. This correction was introduced by Sir Rafael Cilento, Director of the United Nations Relief Organization, in 1948, who spoke of 750,000 needy refugees who were being fed by his organization in November of that year. He, however, admitted that some 100,000 of them were "not strictly refugees" but people "made indigent by warfare." He further explained the discrepancy in recording the correct number of refugees as based on the following:

> *The population of the Arab areas of Palestine has always included a considerable group of destitute people and it is not at all unlikely that many of the latter registered as refugees.*[4]

Taking this into consideration, the number of actual refugees could not have exceeded 650,000 in 1948.

In 1967, an extensive study appeared on the subject which used official Mandatory records and Arab census figures, and reported 539,000 Arab refugees in May of 1948.[5] Starting with a total number of 696,000 Arabs living within the Armistice Lines in 1948, the author subtracted the number that remained in their homes after Israel's Independence (157,000) and hence arrived at his final figure.[6] He concluded that no more than 430,000 were "genuine refugees" in actual need of relief measures.

In 1967, another 250,000 new refugees were reported as a consequence of the Six-Day War.[7] Adding this number to the 1948 figure of 539,000, we arrive at a current total of 789,000 Arab refugees, not counting their offspring.

"NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY HOW MANY REFUGEES THERE ARE"

The source most often cited for the number of Arab refugees has been UNRWA – The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, established in 1949 to aid Arab refugees. In addition to its efforts to rehabilitate the refugees, the Agency was responsible for tabulating the number of refugees and keeping a check on fluctuations in their numbers. In 1950, UNRWA reported 960,021 refugees on its relief rolls. By 1974, the figure rocketed to 1,583,646.[8]

The questions one might ask, in view of these figures, are twofold. Firstly, what accounts for the high discrepancy between initial figures reported by UNRWA as compared to the numbers reported by other reliable sources; and, secondly, how does one explain an increase of 65% in the number of Arab refugees by 1974?

UNRWA's figures were, from the beginning of its operations, based on the number of people holding relief cards. These were distributed according to criteria for eligibility defined as:

> *residence in Palestine from a minimum of two years preceding the outbreak of conflict in 1948 and loss of both home and means of livelihood.*[9]

In many cases, relief candidates could not prove their eligibility and, furthermore, since the definition was so broad and lacked explanations of what to do in the case of people who lost home but not livelihood, or vice versa, thousands of people

[1] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, *Annual Report of the Director* (General Assembly Supplement 16 (A/1905) 1951, p. 1.
[2] Terence Prittie and Bernard Dineen, *The Double Exodus: A Study of Arab and Jewish Refugees in the Middle East*, p. 8.
[3] Seymour B. Liebman, *The Middle East. A Return to Facts*, p. 30.
[4] Joseph B. Schechtman, *Population Transfers in Asia*, p. 123.
[5] Walter Pinner, *The Legend of the Arab Refugees* (Tel Aviv: Economic and Social Research Institute, 1967), p. 67.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 4
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 10
[8] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General*, June 1973 – June 1974 (General Assembly Supplement 13 (A/9613), 1974), p. 62
[9] *Special Report of the Director of UNRWA*, 1954–55, United Nations Document (A/5214), p. 18.

who were basically destitute but not entirely eligible for relief were issued relief cards and, thereby, entered the official population statistics of UNRWA as "refugees".

Another factor which explains the discrepancy in UNRWA's figures concerns the general unreliability of population figures in the Middle East. In November of 1949, Gordon Clapp, the director of the First United Nations Economic Survey Mission to the Middle East, stated in his Interim Report that "no one knows exactly how many refugees there are." He further indicated that "the Mission did not undertake to count the refugees," since "population statistics in the Middle East are tricky."[10]

Two years later, UNRWA reported that a major problem which interfered with the accurate recording of refugees was the refusal on the part of local Arab officials to ever allow a census to be taken by third party observers, non-partisan to the conflict.[11]

By 1955, UNRWA still faced the same problem. Henry R. Labouisse, then the head of UNRWA, stated in Lebanon, in response to the inquiry of Dr. Marguerite Cartwright as to the correct number of refugees: "We really don't have any idea... We just can't get in for an accurate count."[12]

In 1952, UNRWA reported yet another cause for its inflated figures. The Agency indicated in its annual report that in spite of efforts made, it was still not possible to give an absolute figure of the true number of refugees because they were "eagerly reporting births while reluctantly reporting deaths."[13]

On July 23, 1955, *The Mideast Mirror*, a weekly news review published by the Arab News Agency of Cairo, wrote:

> *There are refugees who hold as many as 500 UNRWA ration cards, 499 of them belonging to refugees long dead... They are dealers in UNRWA food and clothing and sell ration cards to the highest bidder... 'Refugee capitalists' is what UNRWA calls them.*

The problem appeared impossible for UNRWA to control and, thus, figures continued to rise as a result of these practices. In 1959, two United States Senators, Gale W. McGee of Wyoming and Albert Gore of Tennessee, were touring the Middle East for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee. As a result of their investigation, they cabled from Amman to President Eisenhower, to Secretary of State Christian A. Herter and to the United Nations that ration cards

> *...have become chattel for sale, for rent or bargain, by any Jordanian, whether refugee or not, needy or wealthy. These cards are used as security for loans from money lenders, for credit from merchants and almost as negotiable instruments... large numbers of ration cards are now in the black market.*[14]

[10] Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Refugee in The World* (New York, 1963), p. 204.

[11] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Report of the Director, *Assistance to Palestine Refugees* (General Assembly Supplement 16 (A/1905), 1951, p. 3.

[12] Marguerite Cartwright, "Plain Speech on the Arab Refugee Problem," in *Land Reborn*, New York, Nov.–Dec., 1958.

[13] United Nations Relief and Works Agency, *Annual Report of Director General, June 1951–July 1951* (General Asseembly Supplement 13 (A/2171), 1952, p. 25.

By 1962, the statistical discrepancy of UNRWA's figures was so high that the Agency was forced to delete 425,059 names from its records.[15] Nevertheless, the problem continued and in 1966 UNRWA again stated that "... statistics are based on the Agency's registration records which do not necessarily reflect the actual refugee population."

Finally, UNRWA's classification of offspring (the children of relief recipients – even those who were born after migration) as *bona fide* refugees – has contributed to an inflation of the refugee statistics from the start, and has thus distorted the picture of the real size of the Arab refugee population.

HOW MANY JEWISH REFUGEES?

A story perhaps less familiar to the public yet equally dramatic is that of Jews from Arab countries who, like Palestinian refugees, were made homeless due to an upsurge of political and social discrimination common in Arab countries in the late '40's and early '50's. During these years, hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees were displaced from their homes in Arab countries.

By 1972, 586,070 Jewish refugees from Arab lands had arrived in Israel.[16] At least another 200,000 found shelter in other parts of the world. Hence, the number of Jewish refugees who fled from Arab countries was at least 786,268, a numter *virtually identical* to the figure of Arab refugees to date.

According to the official definition of UNRWA, children and grandchildren of original refugees (net displacement) may also assume legitimate refugee status.[17] In light of this definition, the net displacement of Jews from Arab countries now living in Israel is 1,136,436.[18]

Compared to this figure, 1,310,000 Palestinian Arabs (including original refugees plus their offspring) who lived in the Land of Israel are currently reported living in the Arab world and other countries.[19]

Hence, the net number of Jews who were displaced from their homes in Arab lands is also comparable to the net number of displaced Arabs. (It should be noted here that the 1,136,436 displaced Jews do not include those who fled to countries

[14] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

[15] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, *A Background Information Series*, Jerusalem, "The Problem of Rectifying the UNRWA Relief Rolls, 1950–1962" (United Nations Information Paper No. 6, 1962), p. 25.

[16] Government of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975.

[17] UNRWA Report 13 (A/9613), *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[18] Government of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975.

[19] Yaacov Caroz, "The Palestinians, Who They Are," in *The Palestinians: People, History and Politics*, ed. by Curtis and others, p. 78.

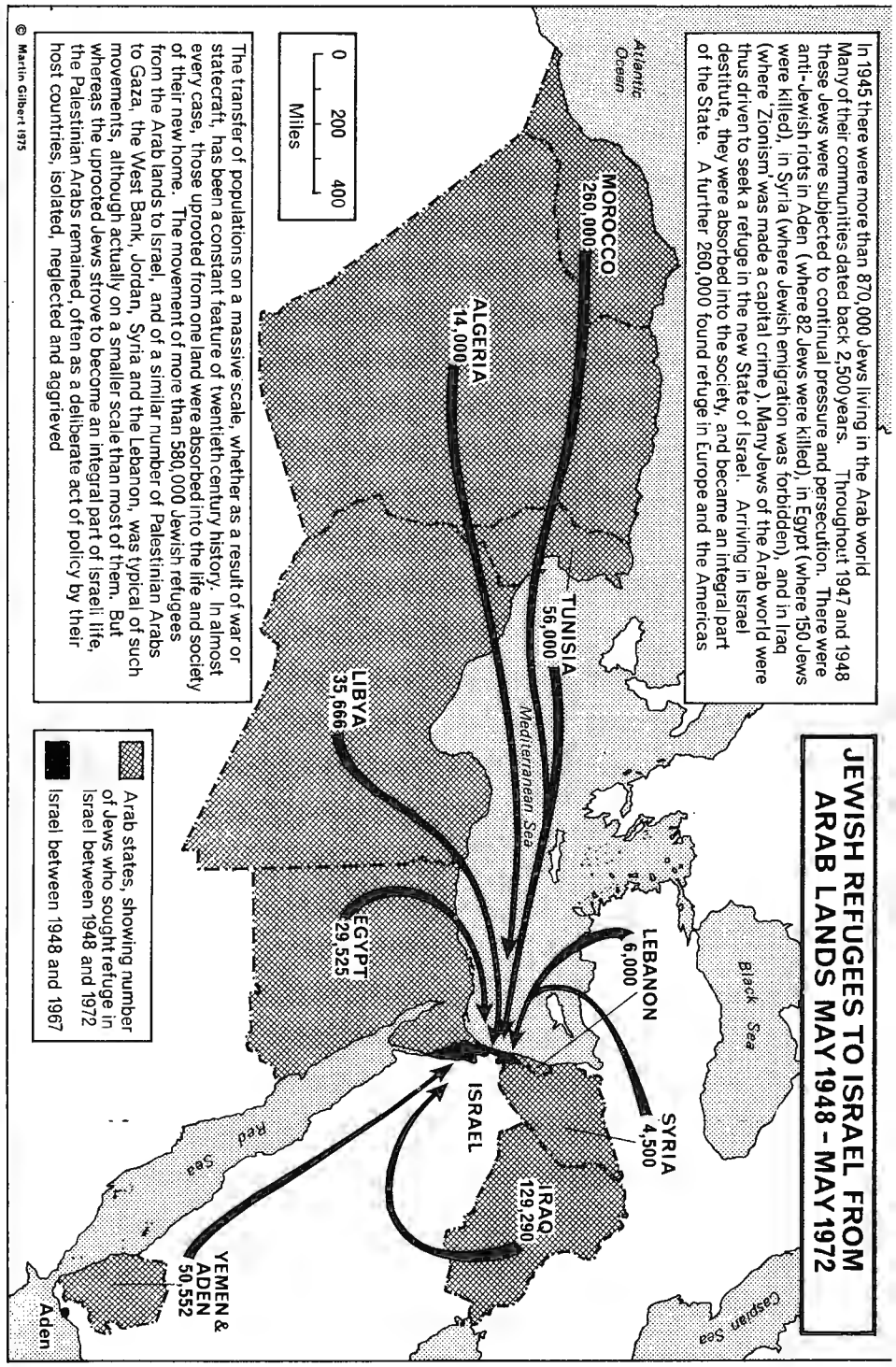
other than Israel. If these refugees and their offspring were to be added, the total number of Jewish refugees would undoubtedly be much greater than the number of Arab refugees.)

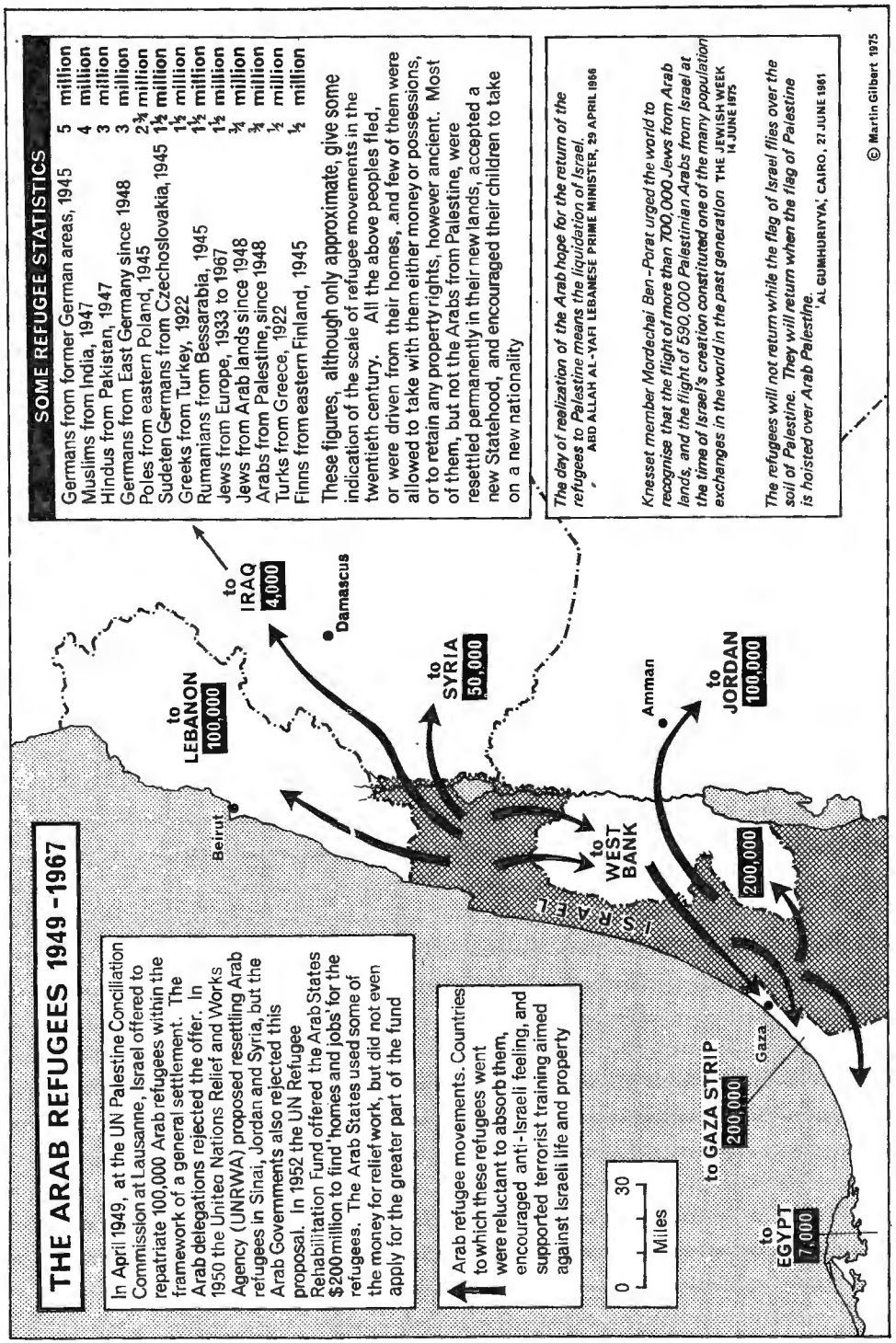
REFUGEES IN THE MIDDLE EAST 1948–1975

Jews		*Arabs*	
Immigrated to Israel	586,268	in 1948	539,000
Immigrated to other countries	200,000	in 1967	250,000
Total	786,268	Total	789,000
Net displacement (in Israel alone)	1,136,436	Net displacement	1,310,000

It is in no way intended here to draw a direct parallel between the fate of the two populations. On the other hand, it is our purpose to point out that in effect the Middle East has witnessed an exchange of populations, a phenomenon common during times of political conflict between nations. Jews displaced from Arab lands found shelter in Israel while most of the Arabs displaced from Israel now live in the surrounding Arab countries. It is important to note, however, that of the total Palestinian population before 1967 (a group which included both refugees and non-refugees) nearly half – or 1,050,000 –[20] now reside in Israel or in Israeli-administered areas, where they have been aided by the Israeli government to establish normal and prosperous life.

[20] *Ibid.* p. 78.





Courtesy of Martin Gilbert

CHAPTER SIX

Refugees or Fugitives? A Look at the Origins of the Refugee Problem

PALESTINIANS: ARE THEY REALLY REFUGEES?

A refugee is defined as one who flees in search of shelter, usually as a result of political persecutions. Were the Arabs compelled to leave Israel? To what degree were they subject to political persecutions?

These questions have been posed numerous times during the past three decades. However, the responses were usually more reflective of political opinion than factual information. With the hindsight of nearly 30 years, we can now take a closer look at the facts to reveal the origins of the "refugee problem."

For Arabs in the 1920's and '30's, the Land of Israel changed from a country which was traditionally one of emigration to one of immigration. This was primarily due to Jewish settlement, which provided increased economic opportunities and made immigration attractive to the Arabs living in the surrounding, underdeveloped countries. The following table summarizes the increase of Arab population in Israel during these years:[1]

THE INCREASE OF ARAB POPULATION IN PALESTINE 1922–1939

City	*Increase in Population*
Haifa	216%
Jaffa	134%
Jerusalem	97%
Nablus	42%
Hebron	40%
Bethlehem	32%

[1] Julian J. Landau, *Israel and the Arabs*, p. 108.

By 1946, the British Mandatory Government recorded 1,200,000 Arabs living in Israel, an increase of 65% over 1922, composed mainly of recent immigrants seeking a more prosperous life style.[2]

Jewish hospitality, as evidenced by the following appeal made by the Assembly of Palestine Jewry on October 2, 1947, could have only increased the Arabs' desire to settle and to remain in Israel:

> *The Jewish people extends the hand of sincere friendship and brotherhood to the Arab people and calls on them to cooperate as free and equal allies for the sake of peace and progress.*

What then caused the dramatic change which motivated thousands of Arabs to leave Israel by late 1947?

On November 29, 1947, the UN resolution called for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Within two days, the neighboring Arab countries denounced the resolution and appealed to Palestinians to flee before the coming great battles. This happened despite the fact that the Partition Resolution gave the Arabs by far the lion's share (82.5%) of the country – in addition to their vast holdings all over the Middle East.

This historical fact is substantiated by Mr. Emile Ghoury, Secretary of the Arab Higher Command, in an interview with *The Beirut Telegraph* on September 6, 1948, when Mr. Ghoury stated:

> *The fact that there are these refugees is the direct consequence of the act of the Arab states in opposing partition and the Jewish State.*

Further evidence of the Arab leaders incitement of Palestinians is recorded as late as October 12, 1963 by the Cairo daily *Al-Akhbar* in the following report:

> *15 May, 1948 arrived...on that very day the Mufti of Jerusalem appealed to the Arabs of Palestine to leave the country because the Arab armies were about to enter and fight in their stead.*

Moreover, the incitement of Palestinians to flee was further facilitated by religious and nationalistic implications. On October 2, 1948, *The London Economist* reported: "....it was clearly intimated that those Arabs who remained (in Haifa) and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades."

According to these reports, therefore, it was the Arab leaders who, by creating panic and fear, incited the Arabs to flee from Israel. A common myth concerning this exodus intimates that the Arabs, frightened by the Deir Yassin incident, finally fled for their lives. True, this regretful incident, openly condemned by a high official of the Jewish Agency shortly after it took place, did cause the tragic deaths of innocent people. However, it was not this incident that caused the Arabs to flee. Deir Yassin took place on April 9, 1948, while the evacuation of the coastal plain started in March, when the Arab Higher Command ordered the people to move east towards the Arab controlled hill region.[3]

Many left their front doors unlocked because they were assured by their leaders that the move would be only temporary. Some set out as if on a holiday. In fact, the Arabs were only moving a distance of a few miles to the west bank of the river Jordan, an area with which they were quite familiar. The move, therefore, seems difficult to define in terms of "exile," as the Arabs have commonly named it.

"What originated as a mock attempt to create a temporary group of refugees eventually became an actual problem," writes Marie Syrkin, as "a planned evacuation turned into a hysterical stampede."[4] The Arabs were not compelled to seek refuge nor were they forced by the Jews to leave Israel. On the contrary, as reported by British Chief of Police A.J. Bridmeak, on April 26, 1948, Jews were making serious efforts to persuade Arabs to remain and to carry on with their normal lives.

Israel's effort to persuade Arabs to stay is further evidenced by a poignant appeal made by the Haifa Workers Council to the Arab residents of Haifa on April 28, 1948:

> *For years we lived together in our city, Haifa, in security and in mutual understanding and brotherhood... Do not fear! Do not destroy your homes with your own hands; do not block off your source of livelihood; and do not bring upon yourselves tragedy by unnecessary evacuation and self-imposed burdens. By moving out you will be overtaken by poverty and humiliation. But in this city, yours and ours, Haifa, the gates are open for work, for life and for peace for you and your families.*

The Arabs were not compelled by Israel to leave. A careful study of the facts shows that it was their own leaders who provoked fear and havoc which eventually made hundreds of thousands into fugitives. As summarized by the Jordan daily *El-Difaa'* on September 6, 1954, "The Arab governments told us, 'Get out so that we can get in.' So we got out, but they did not get in."[5]

When the Arab forces did not "get in," the Palestinians suddenly became unwanted intruders in the various Arab countries they flocked to. Thus, abandoned by their own leaders, they have become what we call today "The Refugee Problem."

JEWISH REFUGEES

In contrast to the efforts made by Jews in Palestine in 1948 to assure the Arabs of their goodwill and fraternal relations, the position of Jews in the countries of the

[2] Palestine Government, *Vital Statistics Tables, 1922–1945* (Jerusalem: Department of Statistics, British Mandatory Government, 1947), p. 4.

[3] Marie Syrkin, "The Palestinian Refugees: Resettlement, Repatriation or Restoration?"; I. Howe and C. Gershman, eds. in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East*, N.Y. 1972, p. 160.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Arab Middle East and North Africa deteriorated rapidly. Government decrees specifically designed against Jews to restrict their economic and religious activities, as well as to deprive them of their minimum civil rights, caused Jews to seek foreign support. This, consequently, branded Jews as disloyal and caused them to be treated as hostages in their own countries of birth.

During the debates in the United Nations General Assembly in 1947, the head of the Egyptian delegation, Dr. Mohammed Hussein Heykal Pasha, did not hesitate to warn that "The lives of a million Jews in Moslem countries will be jeopardized by the establishment of the Jewish State." In a similar vein, Jamal Al-Husseini, Chairman of the Palestine Arab Higher Executive, stated: "If a Jewish State were established in Palestine, the position of the Jews in the Arab countries would become very precarious," adding the ominous warning that "Governments have always been unable to prevent mob excitement and violence."[6]

With the establishment of the State of Israel, these threats were carried out. Jews in Arab countries became the subject of riots, pogroms and mass arrests. Legislation was introduced to confiscate their property, restrict their employment and limit their freedom of movement. Hundreds of Jews were murdered.

A few examples will illustrate this point. In Aden, in December 1947, a mob attacked a Jewish quarter killing 82 Jews, wounding 76 and burning the shops of 100. In Egypt, in July and September of 1948, over 150 Jews were killed. In Iraq, 300 Jews were arrested in May, 1948, when Zionism was made a capital crime.[7]

As a result, over 750,000 Jews became refugees, compelled to flee their homes and seek refuge, the majority in Israel (over 500,000) and the rest in other parts of the world.

[6] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Jewish Exodus From the Arab Countries and the Arab Refugees*, p. 5.

[7] Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Palestinian Arab Refugees — Why are they a Problem?

MIDDLE EAST REFUGEES IN LIGHT OF WORLD REFUGEE MOVEMENTS

Refugee movements and the exchange of populations are common phenomena in world history. In fact, almost every nation has splinters of its population living in someone else's state. Exchanges of refugee populations are particularly common during times of political tension. As Michael Comay, former Ambassador of Israel to the UN, stated in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on November 26, 1948:

> *In times of war and stress, groups which feel insecure tend to move into areas where they have an affinity with the local population based on race, religion, language or culture.*

Compared to the size of world refugee movements of the past 50 years, the movement of refugee populations which took place in the Middle East is rather minor. Since World War II over 100 million people became refugees. West Germany alone rehabilitated 9 million refugees; India and Pakistan integrated 15 million; and Korea resettled at least 4 million refugees.[1] The table below summarizes the startling number of refugees uprooted in the world since 1933.[2]

In view of these figures, the number of refugees uprooted in the Middle East can hardly be regarded as a problem.

The Palestinian Arab refugees to this day constitute less than 1% of the entire Arab population.[3] This small fraction should not have been difficult to absorb. Furthermore, over 85% of all Arab refugees *remained* in the Middle East, an

[1] Julian J. Landau, *Israel and the Arabs*, p. 134.

[2] World Alliance of YMCAs, *World Communique* (July–August 1957, #4).

[3] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Guide to the Arab World* (Heb.).

WORLD REFUGEES 1933 TO 1957

1933–1945	
Refugees escaping totalitarian regimes	1,500,000
Jews uprooted through Nazi regimes	7,000,000
Soviet-Nazi displacement of people	5,700,000
Soviet-Nazi forced labor deportees	16,000,000
Refugees uprooted in European War Zones	18,000,000
Refugees uprooted in Asia	31,000,000
Total	79,200,000
1945–1957	
Refugees uprooted in Europe and Russia	29,100,000
Refugees uprooted in post-war Asia	26,200,000
Refugees uprooted in the Middle East (Including Bulgarian refugees of Turkish origin)	1,700,000
Total	57,000,000
Grand Total	136,200,000

environment familiar to them in terms of language, tradition and life style,[4] a factor which should have facilitated easy integration.

Furthermore, the fact that over half a million Arabs migrated in 1948–49 is by no means unusual for this region. Irrespective of political tensions, migration was always a common characteristic of the Arab Middle East. Sir John Simpson, Vice-President of the League of Nations Refugee Committee, in an investigation of the possibilities of immigration, land settlement and development in Israel, wrote in 1930 that "The 'fellah' is always migrating, even at the present time, he goes to any spot where he thinks he can find work."[5]

This characteristic was further emphasized by W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, in his testimony before the 32nd session of the Permanent Mandates Commission in August 1937, when he stated: "There has always been a certain amount of migration inside the Arab world."

At the time of migration in 1947–48, Palestinian Arabs did not possess a national identity. This developed in the last two decades during which the Arab leaders denied them equal rights. In the same session of the Permanent Mandates Commission, Mr. Ormsby-Gore added:

> *If it were a case of moving the Arabs long distances, to a strange country, transfer would be difficult. These people had not hitherto regarded themselves as Palestinians, but as part of Syria, as part of the Arab world as a whole. They were going to a people with the same language, the same civilization, the same religion, therefore the problem of transfer would be easy."*

[4] Michael Comay, *The Arab Refugees and the Arab-Israel Conflict*, p. 5.
[5] Joseph B. Schechtman, *Population Transfers in Asia*, p. 100.

The absence of an independent Palestinian national identity in 1947 is further validated in an address by Henry Cattan, Representative of the Arab Higher Committee to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly of May 1947, as follows:

> *Palestine was...part of the Province of Syria. Politically, the Arabs of Palestine...were not then independent in the sense of forming a separate political entity.*[6]

Ahmed Shukeiry, then Saudi Arabian delegate to the UN, made the same point by telling the Security Council of the UN on May 31, 1956: "It is common knowledge that Palestine is nothing but southern Syria."

The fact that there is no separate Palestinisn people has been confirmed as recently as March 31, 1977, in an interview given by Zuhair Mohsin, the leader of the pro-Syrian Palestinian guerrilla organization, *as-Saiqa*, and published in the Dutch paper *TROUW* of Amsterdam. There he stated unequivocably:

> *There is in fact not a separate Palestinian people: Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese do not differ. We are part of a people, the Arab nation. I, for instance, have relatives with all these different citizenships. We are one people, only for political reasons we carefully stress our Palestinian identity. For it is in the national interest of the Arabs to encouroge the Palestinian existence against Zionism. Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity serves only tactical reasons. The foundation of a Palestinian state is a new tool to continue the battle against Israel and for Arab unity.*

Lacking a separate national identity, and constituting only a small population which merely transferred from one familiar region to another, the Palestinians should not have presented a problem to the vast and wealthy Arab world. Even Israel, much smaller and faced with a proportionately magnified refugee problem, tackled its refugees with emergency plans and the generous help of world Jewry. Comparatively speaking, Jews fleeing Arab countries, where they had lived for generations, found less affinity with the newly modernizing Israel than did Arab refugees upon their resettlement in the various Arab states of the Middle East. Yet, the Jews managed to shed their refugee status in the span of only a few years. Upon arrival in Israel, the Jewish refugees, like the Arabs, were housed in temporary transit camps *(ma'abarot)* where they lived under crowded and often deplorable hygienic conditions until better housing was facilitated. In August of 1951, there were 123 such camps containing 227,000 people. By 1959, there were only two with 3,500 dwellers (Jewish Agency Report 1959, p. 141).

[6] UN Official Records of the First Special Session of the General Assembly, *Verbatim Record of Meetings*, 52nd meeting, 28 April–13 May, 1947, Vol. III, p. 190.

This swift reduction in refugee status was influenced by Israel's planned settlement policy which helped the refugees acquire new occupations and new life styles. A sample Labor Force Survey conducted in Israel in 1954 found that 50–70% of the new immigrants were working in occupations different from those in which they had worked abroad. One-time merchants and artisans became founders of agricultural villages and the first settlers of Israel's development towns. Today they are free and equal citizens comprising over 50% of the country's entire population.

Why, then, were not the Arab refugees absorbed in a similar manner?

Why do their numbers as refugees continue to increase annually, and why, after 25 years of internationally funded rehabilitation, are they still refugees?

HOW THE ARABS REFUSE TO SOLVE THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

The persistence of the Palestinian refugee problem is best explained by the adamant refusal on the part of Arab leaders to treat Palestinians as respected nationals or to award them equal political rights. When Arab leaders incited Palestinians to leave the newly-established State of Israel, they promised them a hospitable reception in other Arab countries. This, it was soon discovered, was never forthcoming.

By February 19, 1949, the Jordan daily *Falastine* was to report:

> *The Arab states which had encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies have failed to keep their promises to help these refugees.*

The same truth is bitterly testified to by former head of UNRWA Ralph Galloway in 1958 as follows:

> *The Arab States do not want to solve the refugee problm. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations, and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders do not give a damn whether Arab refugees live or die.*[7]

Many opportunities were available for the settlement of Palestinian refugees. Even prior to 1948, the Arab world was in need of a population redistribution in order to progress. This condition could have provided easy ground for refugee absorption. For example, in March of 1951, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development reported that the entire Palestinian Arab refugee population could easily be absorbed by Iraq alone, "were its natural resources developed."[8]

The need for a population increase in Iraq was obvious as early as 1928 when

[7] Terence Prittie, "Middle East Refugees," in *The Palestinians*, ed. by Curtis and others, p. 71.
[8] Seymour B. Liebman, *The Middle East – A Return to Facts*, p. 36.

Prime Minister, Ja'far Pasha Al-Ashari, stated: "What Iraq wants above everything else is more population, this is a necessary condition for progress."[9]

Furthermore, in 1945, President Herbert Hoover outlined the benefits of a transference of Palestinian Arabs to Iraq as follows:

> *There is room for more Arabs in the development of Iraq than the total of Arabian Palestine. The soil is more fertile. They would be among their own race which is Arabic speaking and Mohammedan. The Arab population of Palestine would be the gainer of better lands in exchange for their present holdings, Iraq would be the gainer for its badly needed agricultural population... This particular movement could be made the model migration of history.*

Another country that could have easily absorbed a large portion of the refugees was Syria. The Chatham Report, in 1949, estimated that "Well over 200,000 Palestine refugees could be absorbed within 5 years in agriculture alone if Syria had the required political agreements."[10]

It soon became very clear that Arab leaders were not planning to help Palestinian refugees shed their inferior status. On the contrary, the political potential of maintaining the Palestinians as refugees was quickly calculated by Arab leaders and, hence, efforts were made to prevent any political or social integration of these people. In a report to the Security Council, UNRWA warns of precisely this possibility in a description of the nature of Palestinian refugees as "...rich and tempting soil for exploitation by those with other motives than the welfare of the refugee."[11]

To this day, none of the Arab host countries, with the exception of Jordan, has awarded citizenship to the refugees. In Lebanon, refugees were regarded as being there on sufferance, they were not granted residence visas nor were they entitled to citizenship. Work permits were difficult to acquire and restrictions were placed on movement. In many cases, local leaders prohibited refugees living in camps from leaving them.[12]

The situation in Syria and Egypt had not been as bad as in other Arab countries. However, even these states withheld political rights from the local refugees by denying them citizenship.

In describing the deplorable condition of Arab refugees, UNRWA directly relates this situation to the fact that "No government, except Jordan, has proclaimed the right of refugees to stay."[13]

[9] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
[10] Liebman, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[11] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, *Report of the Director*, "Assistance to Palestine Refugees" (General Assembly Supplement number 16 (A/1905, N.Y. 1951), pp. 5, 39.
[12] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, *Annual Report of the Director General* (General Assembly Supplement number 13(A/2171), N.Y. 1952), p. 46.
[13] UNRWA Report number 16 (A/1905), *op. cit.*, p. 3, paragraph 15.

PROPOSALS FOR RESETTLEMENT ARE REJECTED BY ARABS

Arabs have repeatedly rejected proposals for a resettlement of Palestinian refugees. In 1957, the Beirut daily *L'Orient* wrote:

> *The responsibility of the Arab governments is very great. For eight years these governments have been applying to the refugees an abstract and inhuman policy. Under the pretext of cultivating in the refugees the longing for their homes in Palestine, and for the purpose of maintaining a menacing population on the frontiers with Israel, these governments have systematically rejected attempts at organization and employment for the refugees.*

The following are some of the major appeals for a solution of the Palestinian refugee problem rejected by the Arabs:

- In 1949, a special UN survey mission headed by Gordon Clapp proposed a development plan for the Middle East that would also help solve the refugee problem. Arab obstruction killed this program.
- An agreement signed by Egypt and UNRWA in 1951 to settle 70,000 refugees from the Gaza Strip in Sinai, as part of a regional waterworks project, was abrogated by Egypt.
- In 1952, an Arab Refugee Rehabilitation Fund of $200 million was established by UN resolution #513. This fund was never utilized due to Arab objections to the rehabilitation projects.
- In 1955, President Eisenhower's special envoy, Ambassador Eric Johnston, succeeded in obtaining agreement for the resettlement of 240,000 refugees in the Jordan River Valley, but as Johnston wrote in the *New York Times* on October 19, 1958:

  After two years of discussion, technical experts of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria agreed on every important detail of a unified Jordan Plan. But in October, 1955, it was rejected for political reasons at a meeting of the Arab League.[14]

- A proposal by UN Secretary Dag Hammarskjold in 1959 to use the refugees as a reservoir of manpower in a program for the overall development of the region was shelved as a result of opposition by the Arabs.
- At the 18th session of the UN Special Political Committee in November 1963, Mrs. Golda Meir, then Israel's Foreign Minister, offered direct negotiations with Arab governments on the refugee problem, as an urgent priority. Two years later, Israel Prime Minister Mr. Levi Eshkol made the same offer. When Mrs. Meir became Prime Minister she renewed her proposal. So did her Foreign Minister, Mr. Abba Eban. Nevertheless, all offers from the Israeli side have been ignored or denounced.[15]

[14] Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
[15] Prittie, , *op. cit.*, p. 67.

THE FUNCTION OF UNRWA

The Arab governments having refused to take the responsibility of caring for the refugees, an international body for refugee aid and rehabilitation was forced to emerge. UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, was established on May 1, 1949, by General Assembly Resolution 302(IV), to fulfill the following functions:

1. To carry out in collaboration with local governments the direct relief and works programs as recommended by the Economic Survey Mission.
2. To consult with the interested Near Eastern governments concerning measures to be taken by them preparatory to the time when international assistance for relief and works is no longer available.[16]

Paragraph 2 clearly intimates that UNRWA was established as a *temporary* organization with the purpose of rehabilitating refugees socially and economically so that, in a short period of time, relief recipients would no longer require assistance. This was to be done "in collaboration with local governments," who were expected to facilitate and speed up the social integration of refugees.

Gordon Clapp, the Director of the United Nations Economic Survey Mission to the Middle East, told the House Foreign Affairs Comittee on February 15, 1950:

> *Some of the refugees, I am sure, when they get some of the mobility that work gives them, will begin to think less about wanting to go home and more about where they want to live in the future. Some of them will want to settle where they are.*[17]

Unexpectedly, however, the local Arab countries were not intending to aid the process of refugee integration by affording the type of mobility Clapp anticipated. On May 1, 1950, Maj. General Howard Kennedy, UNRWA's first director, told the United Nations *ad hoc* political committee:

> *Unless there was a complete change of attitude of the countries and refugees concerned, it appeared unlikely for the time being that any general employment would be found which would provide work for the majority of refugees.*
>
> (UNRWA First Interim Report, Oct. 19, 1950)

Since local governments were reluctant to help the refugees, UNRWA was forced to carry on its aid. By 1952, instead of curtailing its work as planned, an expanded development project was outlined for UNRWA requiring additional expenditures of $200 million. Yet, due to the Arabs' persistent refusal to cooperate in rehabilitation of the refugees, UNRWA, after the first 10 years of functioning, wrote in its annual report of 1959–60: "The rehabilitation function

[16] United Nations, *General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions on Palestine 1947–1961* (New York, 1961), p. 35.
[17] Joseph Schechtman, *Refugees in the World*, p. 216.

of UNRWA, which was intended to render a substantial number of refugees self-supporting, has failed to achieve any appreciable results."

By 1974, after spending nearly $1 billion in international funds, UNRWA was still operating unsuccessfully, with an inflated registration role of 1,583,646 relief recipients.[18] In effect, one might conclude that UNRWA's perpetuation – made necessary by the Arab governments' refusal to resettle the Arab refugees – entirely contradicts the temporary nature of its establishment.

THE CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES

Due to exaggerated reports made by Arabs, considerable misconception has always existed about the conditions of refugees and refugee camps. In fact, only 25% of all the Arab refugees (no more than 270,000) were living in camps in 1951.[19] This may be compared to the 256,000 Jewish refugees who lived in transit camps in Israel at the same time.[20]

On March 25, 1953, *Al-Taharir*, an official Egyptian military journal, reported the eye-witness account of an Egyptian officer who visited camps in Gaza as follows:

> *In the camps there is security and plenty, I visited seven of them... In all of them I saw people eating their fill, drinking milk and living comfortable... Do our children drink milk weekly? Have you ever heard of an Egyptian 'fellah' wearing shoes?*

In actuality, the economic conditions and life style within the refugee camps was similar to that of the neighboring Arab cities.

In many cases the life style of the camps was considerably augmented by the refugees themselves who sought to improve the premises and their own consumption by planting trees and vegetable gardens. Often, however, these attempts were frustrated by the Arab officials, who discouraged programs of self-help so as to prolong the refugees' inferior status. A case in point was described in 1961 by the manager of a camp in Jericho as follows:

> *I gave them six thousand trees... Five years ago, the Mukhtars (the village leaders) would not let me give the people trees; they said if they plant trees, the people will never want to go home. Now trees rise over the walls that separate the little houses, and more trees are to be distributed. An inexhaustible supply of clean water flows from twenty-one water points, forty thousand people live here in solid dwellings.*[21]

[18] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General* (General Assembly Supplement #13 (A/9613), New York, 1974), p. 62.

[19] UNRWA Report #16 (A/1905), *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[20] The Jewish Agency, *Report of the Executive Submitted to the 24th Zionist Congress 1951–1955* (Jerusalem: Zionist Organization, 1955), p. 147.

[21] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

Another revealing description of the refugee camps was offered by Dr. Don Peretz who, on a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, undertook a study trip to the Middle East in 1962. He wrote this about the Arab refugee camps:

> *Once the symbol of refugee degradation, the camps, in many instances, have developed into permanent quarters of the towns and cities onto which they were grafted. There are no longer tents in UNRWA camps... the schools, social welfare stations, clinics and feeding centers are often constructed according to the latest architectural models. Indeed, the Palestinians live far better than refugees in India, Pakistan, and Hong Kong.*[22]

Surprising may be the fact that thousands of refugees were successfully integrated. By 1952, close to 20,000 Palestinians had been absorbed into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia where they were employed as technical experts or skilled workers for the government.[23]

On March 22, 1958, the London *Economist* reported that "all refugees of real competence have by now scattered far and wide, from Libya to the Persian Gulf sheikdoms, where they have made new homes and new lives." Furthermore, *Ad Difaa* of September 13, 1959, reported "some 40,000 Jordanian emigrants, most of them Palestinian refugees, were working in Kuwait." Yet another report of refugee integration was given by the *New York Times* on November 13, 1961, which listed 30,000 Arab refugees working in the Gulf area.

UNRWA also managed to successfully rehabilitate about 7,200 refugees in 1954, when an individual grants program was introduced in Jordan and Syria. Under this program small grants were awarded in exchange for relief cards to refugees desiring to establish themselves in economically sound ventures. Unfortunately, however, in 1957 this program was cancelled due to lack of funds.[24]

Many more Arab refugees could have been successfully rehabilitated. Had the Arab host countries shown concern for human justice, the refugees could have esily been integrated through the aid of UNRWA and the various proposals made by international bodies. Fear of cultivating a competitive and potentially militant minority prompted local Arab citizens and their leaders to perpetuate the deplorable status of Palestinian refugees. By prolonging this state, the Arabs have, for their own political advantage, unjustifiably and inexcusably fostered a "refugee problem."

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES

From the start of its operations on May 1, 1949 to Dec. 31, 1974, UNRWA has spent a total of $985,418,237 in refugee aid.[25] According to UNRWA's

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 236–237.

[23] United Nations Document Supplement #13 (A/2171), Annex.

[24] Schechtman, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

[25] UNRWA Report #13 (A/9613), *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

declaration upon its establishment, this money was allocated to provide relief assistance for *all* refugees of the Near East. This should have included Jews as well as Arabs. However, the up-to-date expenditures of close to $1 billion have been spent on Arab refugees alone. Israel, with the assistance of world Jewry, carried the burden of rehabilitating its Jewish refugees.

UNRWA's budget is composed of international funds* of which leading contributors have been the U.S.A. ($577,324,582) and the United Kingdom ($133,334,254). The U.S.S.R. has contributed nothing. Israel, one of the smallest and poorest nations, has contributed $5,015,220 to UNRWA, significantly more than most Arab states with the exception of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who have contributed a fairly similar amount.

The following table summarizes aid to UNRWA by Middle Eastern countries.[26]

MIDDLE EAST CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNRWA 1950–1974

Country	*Amount*
Egypt	5,483,656
Saudi Arabia	5,393,000
Israel	5,015,220
Jordan	3,396,332
Kuwait	3,382,860
Libya	2,614,000
Syria	2,186,425
Lebanon	1,133,566
Iraq	975,228
Morocco	522,418
Iran	174,047

ISRAEL'S AID TO ARAB REFUGEES

In addition to its contribution to UNRWA, Israel has so far allocated $120 million to improve the economy and social services of Palestinian Arabs living in the administered areas. In 1970–71 alone Israel spent $22 million in the West Bank and another $17 million in the Gaza Strip on local development.

Due to Israel's efforts, Arabs now living in these areas enjoy a higher standard of living than do residents of most Arab states. By 1969, more than 95% of the labor force in the West Bank and Gaza were employed. Of these, 40,000 work

[26] *Ibid.*

* Since this largely represents the citizens' tax money of the countries concerned it would not be amiss to mention here that the oil income of the Arab countries for 1975 alone was $59 billion.

outside the administered areas, today earning the same salary as the average Israeli. Furthermore, in 1971, the increase in per capita net income as compared to 1968 was 45% for Judea and Samaria, and 58% for the Gaza Strip.[27]

The following table illustrates the percentage increase in per capita income (based on gross national product per capita) of Arabs living in the administered areas since 1968.

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT PER CAPITA OF ARABS IN THE ADMINISTERED AREAS[28]

Year	*% Increase*
1968–1970	30.0
1970–1971	16.5
1971–1972	18.5
1972–1973	8.5
1973–1974	6.5
1974–1975	4.5

Today there are 1,112,200 Arabs living in the administered areas of whom 510,000 are refugees. The refugees comprise 60% of the total population of Gaza and 18% of the population in the West Bank.[29]

Since the refugees comprise nearly 50% of the population living in these areas, they too have benefited considerably from the steady rise in the standard of living. By 1975, only 30% of the refugees remained living in camps (a total of 170,000 people) while 58% of them were employed in Israel, earning average Israeli wages and benefiting from the associated welfare and social services.[30] The rest are employed within the administered areas, earning a salary comparable to that of their neighbors.

By 1974, the improved economic conditions of the refugees permitted 90% to own their own homes. Furthermore, by that time the State of Israel had commenced the construction of an additional 4,000 subsidized, high-standard housing units for purchase by the refugees at the nominal cost of 20,000 Israeli pounds per unit.[31] Another indication of the economic integration of the refugee is his monthly expenditure. In 1974, the average refugee family was spending 530 Israeli pounds on food, household and personal needs,[32] a figure close to the average spent by non-refugee families living in the same area.

[27] Government of Israel, *Administered Territories, 1971–72* (Jerusalem: Department of Defense, 1973), p. 12.

[28] Israel Government, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1977.

[29] Aryeh Bergman, The Economy of the Administered Territories, 1974–75 (Jerusalem: The National Bank of Israel, 1976), p. 32.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[32] Family Expenditure Survey in the Administered Territories 1973/74 (Jerusalem: The Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel Government, 1976), p. 3.

During the past decade, Israel has dramatically enhanced the economy and social life of the administered areas by introducing modern technology and additional sources of employment for the local Arab population. Since 1967, new water works have been established, 30 factories and 20 vocational training centers built, while more than $3 million in loans was granted for local development.[33] The resultant changes have also raised the standard of living for the refugee living in the administered areas, so that today he enjoys the same economic and social benefits as the people living around him.

ISRAEL HELPS SOLVE THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

UN Resolution 194 (III) of December 11, 1948 says: "Those refugees wishing to return to their homes *and live at peace with their neighbors* should be permitted to do so."

By December 19, 1948, Israel accepted 108,000 Arabs back into her territory.[34] Since 1967, another 14,000 Palestinian Arabs were resettled in Israel, out of 25,000 applicants. Under a Family Reunion Plan, 50,000 Arab refugees have been repatriated in Israel since 1949.[35]

Israel has also freed accounts and safe deposits of Arab refugees amounting to $10 million. In contrast, Arab states confiscated, nationalized or destroyed public and private Jewish property estimated in the billions of dollars.

Israel's assistance to Arab refugees has not been of a material nature alone. Characterized by a distinctly humanitarian attitude, Israel has opened her borders and permitted over three quarters of a million Arabs from the neighboring states to visit Israel for work, study or family reunion since 1967. Arab tourism to Israel has been on the increase despite the absence of peace.

ARAB VISITORS TO THE ADMINISTERED AREAS[36]

1968 1969 1970	figures unknown
1971	93,200
1972	152,500
1973	111,900
1974	124,000
1975	119,500
1976	119,800
Total	720,900

[33] Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
[34] The Jewish Agency, *Digest of Press and Events* (Jerusalem: December 31, 1948).
[35] Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
[36] Government of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1977.

Because of political attitudes, the Arab world does not yet extend the same privilege to Israelis.

CONCLUSION

The Palestinian failure to set up a state in 1948, as envisaged by the UN, and the invasion of Israel by Arab armies in the same year, were the two factors responsible for the creation of an Arab refugee problem.

Instead of bearing the consequences of their policies, the Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, consistently refused to absorb the Palestinian refugees in contrast to the integration of other refugees elswhere by their host countries.

The opportunities were available and offers were made by governments and international organizations for the resettlement of the refugees in the same region of the Middle East, only a few hundred kilometers from where the refugees once lived. These offers and others made by the State of Israel were turned down by the Arab states. For political reasons, the Arab League had deliberately retained as many Arab refugees as was possible in camps and shanty towns, which eventually became the breeding grounds for resentment and hatred, prolonging unnecessarily human suffering.

However, despite the policy upheld by the Arab League, the majority of Arab refugees was nonetheless absorbed in the same territory once called Palestine, i.e., Jordan and the West Bank, and their living conditions have become equal to that of the population at large. Those refugees who chose to migrate to the oil countries (including a large number who had been living in Lebanon) enjoy unprecedented economic prosperity. Hence, the problem is not one of economics but has been maintained as a political issue.

Instead of cooperating with the UN, with other nations or with Israel to find a solution to the refugee problem, Palestinian extremists, with the support of the Arab states, proposed the establishment of a "Palestinian Democratic Secular State" in Israel. Upon closer look, this means replacing Israel by yet another Arab state.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Myth of a "Palestinian Democratic Secular State"

Now I understand why Israel is refusing the suggested "democratic Palestine" where the Israelis and the Palestinians would live together. The outstanding example the Palestinian people are giving now in Lebanon, is, I believe, more than enough to warn Israel of such a trap-state.

I am a Lebanese citizen whose brother and two cousins have been coldly shot down by the Palestinians in their own homes in Hitlerian style. I can already see the day when, in order to survive, our people will join Israel, being bound to the same fate: SURVIVAL.

Eliss Marvun, Beirut
TIME Magazine, July 14, 1975

The concept of a "Democratic Secular State" adopted by the Palestinians is both alien to, and remote from, Arab political thought, let alone from current Arab reality or their political institutions.

Majid Khadduri, the Iraqi-born, distinguished research professor at The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and Director of the Center for Middle East Studies, wrote in his book *Political Trends in the Arab World:*

> *During the inter-war years, nationalism and political democracy were accepted by the ruling elite in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent as working concepts and institutions to replace traditional loyalty and institutions. The first ideology succeeded in becoming the basis of polity, but the second one,... failed to provide a working substitute for traditional institutions.*[1]
>
> *Today, the fate of the free thinkers in the Arab world is not much better than in the past; most of those who hold unorthodox views have been reluctant to speak openly because of state censorship and traditional intolerance towards innovations.*[2]
>
> *Ever since the Kamalist regime took action to separate the State from religion – an action often referred to as the "secularization of Islam" – the term "secularization" has acquired in the Arab world the connotation of undermining religion. Thus, any secular proposal intended to reform an Islamic institution has been rejected.*[3]

[1] Majid Khadduri, *Political Trends in the Arab World; The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics*, p. 27.

Another reference to democracy and Islam comes from Ali Abd al-Raziq in his book *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm*, where he stated that "Islam was not founded on sound principles and it could not provide the basis for a democratic system."[4]

After a serious and painstaking analysis of the trends in the political development of the Arab world, Khadduri's conclusion on secularism is as follows:

> *The principle of secularism, fully accepted by Turkey, has not yet been finally adopted by any Arab country.*[5]

According to Khadduri, one of the elements which influence current Arab leaders is the Islamic legacy. On this, he says:

> *Whenever the* Jihad *was dormant, diplomatic and commercial ties were permitted, and believers and infidels crossed frontiers without difficulty. Peace treaties were necessarily of short duration, but they were often renewed by mutual agreement and observed with good faith. The law that governed Islam's intercourse with other nations, called the* Siyar, *was a set of rules and practices derived from Islam's long experience with other nations as well as from Islam's own legal and ethical system. According to this law, the* Jihad *will come to an end when Islam has engulfed the whole world and mankind lives in peace under the public order of* Pax Islamica.[6]

Thus, from the above quotations, one can deduce that the terms "secular" or "democratic" have no basis in Arab or Islamic thought. It is obvious that Palestinian organizations have utilized the term as a slogan which they found to be appealing to the world but which, on closer scrutiny, has no real foundation or roots in Islam.

Furthermore, the history of the treatment of Jews in Arab lands under Muslim rule during the last 1300 years clearly indicates the kind of "secularism" or "democracy" under which they lived. The history of massacres, imprisonments without trial, confiscation of property, deprivation of human rights, etc., are too well known to need elaboration here. Suffice to say that these acts seem to be

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 212–3.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 217.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[5] *Ibid.*,
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

consonant with Islamic traditions and justified by Arab political thought throughout the ages. Hardly any Arab or Muslim thinker has ever addressed himself to these injustices and mistreatment of minorities.

Therefore, the question that should be asked is not whether the Arabs are capable of reforming their political institutions so as to allow democracy or secularism in their states, but rather how the Arabs treat their subjects and specifically minorities like the Jews.

To ask the Jews from Arab lands who found in Israel solace and freedom from persecution to return to their countries of origin is tantamount to committing their fate to destruction. Excerpts from addresses by Arab leaders will shed light on the value the Arabs attach to human rights, the treatment of minorities, or how they utilize religion in the service of hatred and anti-Semitism.

In Libya, "The Revolution Command Council (saw) its duty to *prepare* a new generation of journalists and writers who will adhere to the *Islamic moral code* and believe in the principles of freedom, socialism and unity."[7]

Furthermore, "A law which was issued by the Revolution Command Council (states) that the thief will have his right hand amputated if the theft is proved. The armed robber will be punished by death if he killed someone, regardless of whether he stole anything or not; his right hand and left foot will be amputated if he seized any property without killing. In accordance with this law the hand of the thief will be amputated even if it is paralysed or thumbless or fingerless..."[8]

On political parties, Libya instituted a law in 1973 which "provides for the execution of any partisan."[9]

Speaking at Zuwarah on the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, President Ghaddafi said:

> ...*Some sick people speak about* freedom *of expression,* freedom *and* democracy. *You have noticed that in the university seminars some sick students...when given the chance to speak,* dominated *the scene. The words they uttered had no connection whatsoever with Libyan reality... They spoke about freedom in the* universities.
>
> *The country must be* purged *of all sick people. Anyone who makes propaganda for a western country or advocates capitalism is a* sick *man who is carrying out subversive activity. We will* imprison *him.*
>
> *We are Muslims and rule by the Islamic Sharia...*
>
> *For the sake of Arab unity, I do not mind even if a* civil *war breaks out and lasts* 60 years. *That is not important... I do not mind if all the masses turn into a force which* destroys *and* breaks *things until it remains alone in the arena.*[10]

[7] Libyan News Agency 16/1972, as reported in The Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs *The Arab View*, p. 183.
[8] Libyan Radio, October 12, 1972, *Ibid.*
[9] Tripoli Radio, February 10, 1973. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[10] Tripoli Radio, April 15, 1973. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

According to Tripoli Radio of April 16, 1973:

> *Great people* tear up *all the* imported books *which do not express Arabism, Islam, Socialism and progress – the socialism which emanates from the Quran – not the misleading socialism...*
>
> *We must crush him and trample him under our feet, he who seeks freedom for himself or for his party...he is the* enemy *of the people.*[11]

On November 21, 1972, David Hirst, a correspondent of the British *Guardian*, reported on the Coptic (Christian) minority in Egypt:

> *Egypt's Coptic minority are seriously worried at what they regard as the threat of persecution from the Moslem majority... There seems to be some ground for Coptic charges that the authorities are pandering to the Ghaddafist brand of religious revivalism.*

Another case of persecution of minorities in the Arab world: the Kurds in Iraq. According to Radio Cairo, 40,000 Kurds living in the south of Iraq were expelled in August 1972. It was not too long afterwards that Iraq "liquidated" once and for all the "Kurdish question" with unparallelled brutality. Tens of thousands of Kurds are being displaced from Syria's Jezira oil rich area and forcibly arabized by the country's "democratic" regime. In Egypt, allegedly the most progressive country in the Arab world, one reads in its daily paper *Al-Akhbar* of September 11, 1972 the following paragraph with regard to Jews:

> *Nobody finds the time to say: The* Jews *are by nature* bloodthirsty *beasts. All their religious books testify to that and describe them as having the meanest characteristics...*

A well-known Egyptian columnist, Anis Mansour, wrote in the same paper on August 19, 1973, as follows:

> *The* Jews *are real wild* beasts *interested only in taking* revenge *on the oppressor and oppressed, i.e. all* mankind. *They are the enemies of mankind and what they do in the occupied land Hitler did not manage to do.*
>
> *Therefore people all over the world have begun to think kindly of the* genius *who did not burn the remaining Jews... because* treason *is the* nature *of the Jews.*

On December 29, 1972, *Al-Ra'y al-'Am* of Kuwait wrote:

> If we believe what we say *and proclaim again and again that Oriental Jews (in Israel) suffer from the arrogance of Western Jews, if we realize the danger from the Oriental Jews who look like us and speak Arabic fluently because they have lived among us – then, why don't we take a bold step, which will gain the admiration of the world and deal a catastrophic blow to Israel?*

[11] Tripoli Radio, April 16, 1973. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

What will happen if those Arab states, from which Jews were expelled *or emigrated to Palestine, proclaim that they will welcome back all their Jewish citizens and promise them freedom of religion and expression and all other liberties including the same right to work as is granted to Arab citizens? What will happen if Arab states declare that they want a UN committee to supervise the implementation of these obligations towards returning Jews, will restore all their money and property which were left behind or* confiscated *when they left the country?*

The foregoing statements are only samples which describe the climate of the countries in which Jews have been living and to which they have now been invited to return. Should these Jews take a lesson from the Maronites in Lebanon, the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, the Copts in Egypt, the Kabyl in Algeria or the Italians and the Greeks in Libya, who have been either persecuted, expelled or liquidated?

The conditions of Jews in Arab countries today, what is left of them, are a living monument to the real intention of the Arab states. Since the Arab world has failed to destroy Israel as it is known today, the Arabs and the Palestinians plan to achieve their goal by dismembering the state through an appeal to the Oriental Jews in Israel to leave Israel. It is reminiscent of the call of the Arab states to the Palestinians in 1948! They reckon that with one half of its population recalled to the Arab states and only one half left in the State, an absurdity in itself, the Jews can be easily liquidated. It is a matter of *tactics*, as the Palestinian organizations put it, since it has become impossible and unwelcome to world public opinion to throw the Israelis into the sea!

It is instructive to note the views expressed by members of the Palestinian organizations in a symposium concerning the meaning of "Democratic Palestinian State" as reported in the Beirut newspaper *al-Anwar* of March 8, 1970. Here it becomes clear that the "Democratic Palestinian-State" is no more than a slogan and is no less than an Arab state for the Palestinians.

Even if we wished, by force of circumstances, a Democratic Palestinian State "period", this would mean its being non-Arab. Let us face matters honestly. When we speak simply of a Democratic Palestinian State, this means we discard its Arab identity. I say that on this subject we cannot negotiate, even if we possess the political power to authorize this kind of decision, because we thereby disregard an historical truth, namely, that this land and those who dwell upon it belong to a certain environment and a certain region, to which we are linked as one nation, one heritage and one hope – Unity, Freedom and Socialism...[12]

In another reference:

If the slogan of the Democratic State was intended only to counter the claim that we wish to throw the Jews into the sea, this is indeed an apt slogan and an effective political and propaganda blow. But if we wish to regard it as the

[12] Y. Harkabi, *Palestinians and Israel*, p. 88.

ultimate strategy of the Palestinian and Arab liberation movement, then I believe it requires a long pause for reflection, for it bears upon our history, just as on our present and certainly our future.

I conclude with a warning that this may be the beginning of a long dispute resulting in a substitute for the basic objective of the Palestinian revolution, which is the liberation of the Palestinian land and individual within the national totally Arab framework to which we belong.[13]

The symposium also uncovered the definition of "Democratic" as understood by the Palestinian organizations:

When we speak of democracy, it must be clear that we do not mean liberal democracy in the manner of "one man, one vote."[14]

On Jews from Arab countries, a representative of *as-Saiqa* said:

It should be made clear that the Arabs initially blocked the way for Jews to return to their countries. If the Arab governments had treated these situations from the start, the problem would have "budged" by now. There are a number of circumstances which point to this...[15]

When WOJAC (World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries) convened its first Convention in Paris on November 24 and 25, 1975, Iraq and Morocco rushed to publish full page advertisements in leading European papers, calling on Jews from Arab countries to return to their countries of origin. They were promised "all constitutional rights, equality and means of subsistence without any discrimination."

The Italian monthly *Shalom* of Rome, in its issue of December 1976, wondered how this generous invitation could be reconciled with Iraq's well known record of persecutions, humiliation and murder of Jews, especially when eligibility for an entry visa to Iraq in 1976 required a Certificate of Baptism. *Shalom* asks "where are those 'constitutional rights and equality' promised to Jews by the Iraqi government?"

Thus little has changed in the basic attitudes of Arabs towards Jews. Jews at best were and still are conceived of as a "protected minority" dependent on Islam and the goodwill of the Arabs, and therefore unworthy of constituting an independent political entity in the Middle East. This is perhaps best reflected in the positions and ultimate intentions of the Palestinian organizations.

In the words of the orientalist, Georges Vajda, as reported in D.G. Littman's paper, "Jews and Arabs – Myths and Realities":

...it seems to us that, short of denying its principles, or rudely offending the profound sentiments of its coreligionists and of questioning its own raison d'être, *no Moslem state, however "liberal" it would like to be (we say*

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 88–9.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

"however it would like" and not "however much it may proclaim itself to be"), could so depart from the line of conduct followed in the past and in effect pursued at present, as to allow its Jews anything but a status of "protection" for ever, "papered over" to a certain extent by a poorly affected western phraseology, and in no wise a status of integration. This, moreover, applies in like manner to the Christian minority,[16] *whatever the higher anti-Jewish bid (if one bears in mind the recent Vatican Council) that it may have recourse to, be it out of political necessity or by virtue of the* odium theologicum *implanted much more deeply in the Eastern Church than in the Western, and long before the birth of Islam.*

[16] Louis Gardet, *L'Islam, Religion et Communauté*, pp. 340–47/426 ff.

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Some of the photographs in this book are courtesy of the Ben-Zvi Institute and the Libyan Jewish Council of Israel.



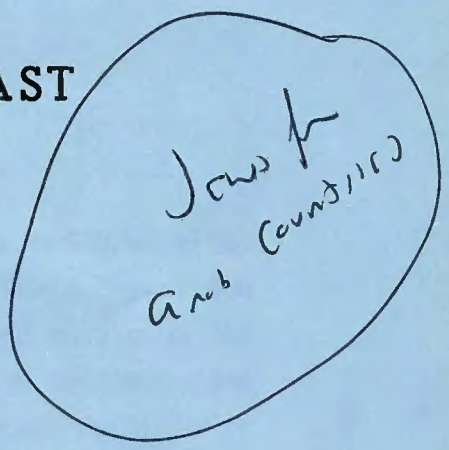

"While it would not be difficult to catalog a significant quota of Jewish subjects who rose to a high rank in Islamic lands in places of power, in financial influence and in impressive and recognized intellectual achievements ..., it will be just as easy to cite a long inventory of persecutions, arbitrary confiscations, attempts at forcible conversion and pogroms.

G.E. von Grunebaum



From the Rostrum
of the United Nations:

WHO IS A REFUGEE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



WOJAC
World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries

Second Edition

"Well, the Palestinians have rights... Obviously, there are Jewish refugees also... They have the same rights as others do."

President Jimmy Carter in a Press Conference on October 27, 1977.

PREFACE

The following pages contain the address, in English, of Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat, Co-Chairman of the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC) and member of the Israel Delegation, before the 32nd session of the UN General Assembly on December 13, 1977. Included is also the statement made by Ambassador Shaul Ramati to the Special Political Committee on October 31, 1978, in exercise of his right of reply.

For the first time in the annals of the United Nations, the issue of Jewish refugees from Arab countries has figured prominently. From the rostrum of the General Assembly, Mr. Ben-Porat, himself a Jew of Iraqi origin, challenged the Arab States to contest the record of their treatment of Jews in their respective countries and to find a solution for the Arab refugee problem in the framework of an exchange of population between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

Address of Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat,
Co-Chairman of the World Organization of Jews
from Arab Countries (WOJAC) before the
32nd session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations
on December 13, 1977

...In explanation of vote, however, I should like to repeat and elaborate on our position as set out in paragraph 18 of document A/SPC/32/SR.21, regarding Draft Resolution A. We abstained on that draft resolution in the Committee and we shall do so again today because the interpretation of General Assembly Resolution 194 (III) contained in the draft resolution does not correspond with Israel's interpretation. Moreover, Israel is unable to accept the figures for Palestinian Arab refugees as shown in UNRWA records and has strong reservations about the definition employed as to who is a refugee.

DE FACTO POPULATION EXCHANGE

Besides that, there have been significant political developments since General Assembly resolution 194 (III) was adopted in 1948, including the liquidation of the Jewish communities in Arab lands and the massive migration of Jews from those countries to Israel. Those developments, covering more than two decades of turbulent history, are taken into account by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which, **inter alia**, call for a negotiated settlement of the refugee problem — Jewish and Arab. It is Israel's position that the problem of Arab and Jewish refugees in the Middle East can only find practical solution within the framework of the **de facto** population exchange which has already taken place.

The present draft resolution restricts our vision to just one of the refugee problems connected with the Arab-Israel conflict. But this blinkered approach is inadequate. Today, I stand before the Assembly as a member of the Israel Delegation to the General Assembly. But I was once a Jewish refugee from Iraq, and I have therefore a certain personal **locus standi** in this matter.

From my own first-hand experience, which was shared by hundreds of thousands of Jews in Arab countries, I know the trials and tribulations of persecution and humiliation,

of deprivation of human rights, property and belongings, and finally of expulsion. During the **Farhud,** that vicious anti-Jewish pogrom in Baghdad in 1941, my family was exposed to great danger. My mother was kidnapped. A few years later I myself was imprisoned and brutally tortured. Eventually I was able to flee, crossing the Iraqi border, on foot and without papers. I arrived in Israel penniless, and in the early 1950's directed transit camps for tens of thousands of Jews from Arab countries, where my family and I lived with them. I saw those people, housed in make-shift huts, without water, without electricity, exposed to rain, wind and even flood. Professional people were helpless; they did not have their licenses or any other certificates with them. Those had been torn to shreds by Arab officials in certain Arab countries when they left.

As I stand here and explain my delegation's vote on the draft resolutions, it is important that we re-assess some of the events which created the refugee problem.

POLICY OF EXPULSION

Thirty years ago, from this very rostrum, my former countryman, Mr. Fadel Al-Jamali, the then Iraqi Foreign Minister, made serious threats against the Iraqi Jews, thereby joining other Arab States in intimidating the million Jews then living in Arab lands and exposing them to violence and massacre.

Jamali's threat was part of a premeditated policy. As testified by Sir Alex Kirkbride, a former British Ambassador to Amman, in his recently published memoirs, Iraq's Prime Minister at the time, Nuri Al-Said, had gone to Amman to seek Jordan's approval for the deportation to Israel, through Jordanian territory, of the "majority of Jewish communities of Iraq". The Iraqi scheme was to bring Jews over "in army lorries, escorted by armoured cars" and to force them to cross the Jordanian-Israeli frontier.

Who were the Jews exposed to the brutal schemes of expulsion of Iraq and other Arab States, and where are they now? Who has absorbed them, and what about their legal rights and claims? What mention is made of them in the draft resolutions?

For 3,000 years there was a permanent presence of large Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa. Their history is richly inscribed through their cultural achievements and creative contributions to all avenues of human endeavour.

Through their long and active involvement, a thousand years before the Arab conquest and 25 centuries before the birth of the modern Arab States, the Jewish People acquired no small share in the intellectual and material substance of the area. The Jews extended help and friendship to the Arabs at the birth of Islam and helped them achieve political independence in modern times.

ISRAEL GAVE SHELTER

By way of gratitude, those Jews, so deeply rooted in the area, were brutally expelled. Where should they have gone? Like Nuri Al-Said, the heads of other Arab Governments recognized that the Jews had a right to go to Israel, their ancestral home and reborn State.

To this very day, that period of suffering has left deep scars on the Jewish refugees from Arab lands. The major difference between them and the Arab refugees from "Palestine" is the extent of the financial aid and other assistance they received from their respective brethren. Draft Resolution A deals with assistance to Palestinian Arab refugees. But, of the $1.3 billion contributed by the International Community from May 1950 to date for the Arab refugees, less than 6 per cent, or $77,386,000, was contributed by Arab Governments. On the other hand, the Jewish refugees from Arab countries never relied on international charity. Israel, with the help of Jews from all over the world, gave shelter to those victims of Arab persecution. It opened its gates to every Jew, young or old, fit or ailing. It gave them shelter, new lives and dignity. We and our children have now tasted real freedom. Our human rights are protected, and we enjoy civil liberties. We vote and are elected. We shall never let ourselves be hostages to fortune again.

THEY WON'T GO BACK

Draft Resolution C calls on Israel to return to the camps in Gaza refugees for whom Israel has made it possible to work and buy new homes outside the camps. Those refugees will never agree to go back to the dreadful conditions they experienced in the camps. But, I must add, the same applies to Jewish refugees from Arab lands. The memories of the humiliations and dispossessions, and of the prisons and hangings in public squares, together with the plight of the remnants of Syrian Jewry,

make a mockery of so-called invitations from some Arab Governments to Jews to return.

Arab Governments should realize that the rights of the Jews from Arab lands, their material interests and legal claims, now form a central element of the conflict, and parallel the Palestinian Arab refugee problem. This has been understood by certain Palestinian Arab spokesmen. Speaking about the cruel trial the Jews have undergone in Arab countries, Sabri Jirgis wrote in the Lebanese daily **Al Nahar** on 15 May 1975: "No need to relate now the way by which they accomplished the dislodgement of the Jews from Arab states from their countries, where they lived for centuries, expelling them in the most ugly manner, after confiscating their property or seizing control of it at the cheapest price. It is impossible to justify the matter by saying that it was the past regimes in the Arab world, aided by the Imperialist Power which worked in coordination with Zionism that did it... The historical results ensuing from such an operation cannot be wiped out by such simple pretexts... There is no need to say that the problem of those Arab Jews and their transfer to Israel is not merely theoretical, at least as far as the Palestinians are concerned. It has a very practical repercussion on the future of the Palestinian problem."

Draft Resolution E concerns the return of persons displaced during and in the wake of the Six-Day War of 1967. But, again, the problem is more complex.

The implications resulting from the dislodgement of Jews from Arab countries also extend to Israel's right to live within recognized and secure boundaries. Only a few weeks ago, President Hafez Al-Assad of Syria said that

> "...the total area of the West Bank is 5,000 square kilometres, which cannot accommodate 3 million Palestinians. But the area of Israel is 20,000 square kilometres, and it can."

Let me respond that the territory in Arab countries which we, a million Jews from Arab countries, were forced to evacuate is much broader than the "20,000 square kilometres" of the State of Israel. Charity begins at home; and if the Syrian President and other Arab leaders think that Arab refugees need some territory, let the Arab countries with their vast territories extending from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, over twice as large as Europe, avail themselves of the space evacuated by Jews in those countries.

A BRIDGE OF PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING

The Arab world can no longer avoid its responsibilities towards the million Jewish refugees who fled their various countries, and their offspring who number another million. In order to present their claims, the Jews concerned have founded the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC), whose co-chairman it is my privilege to be. It is their rights and their claims — natural, historical and legal — which it is our duty to reserve for redress within the framework of a final peace agreement between Israel and the Arab States.

As other members of my delegation have pointed out, this debate has become largely irrelevant in the light of the historical process begun in Jerusalem and continuing in Cairo tomorrow with the opening of the Preparatory Conference for Geneva. The American-Israel Working Paper of 5 October 1977 has laid down that "the solution of the problem of the Arab refugees and the Jewish refugees will be discussed on terms to be agreed upon".

Israel has contributed its part by absorbing the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Let the Arabs do the same for their brethren. Each wave of refugees, Jewish or Arab, should dwell peacefully among its own nation and thus help form the bridge of peace and understanding between Israel and the Arab countries. With that vision before us, let us work for a negotiated peace in the Middle East, the source of so many civilizations and the potential cradle of so much more.

Statement by Ambassador Shaul Ramati in the Special Political Committee on October 31, 1978, in exercise of his right of reply.

The representative of the Baathist entity of Baghdad spoke of the problem of illiteracy in his country. It does seem, indeed, that he has some difficulty in pronouncing the names of some member states of the United Nations.

We can only understand his invitation to Jews to return to Iraq as a joke in bad taste. Surely we are all aware of Iraq's treatment of minorities. We recall with sadness the genocide of the Assyrians, the denial of self-determination to the Kurds, against whom they have waged a cruel war of destruction for years, whom they have uprooted and dispersed, whose villages they have wiped out. We remember the pogrom against the ancient Jewish community of Iraq in 1941 in the days of

Rashid Ali. We remember the terrorization of the Jewish community after 1948, when work opportunities were denied to Jews, children were beaten up so they could no longer go to school and Mr. Adas, one of the leading Jews of Baghdad, who had served his country well, was hung in the courtyard of his own house. We remember how, having made their continued stay in Iraq impossible, the Iraqi Government offered the Jews the right to register for emigration, and when they had done so, passed a retroactive law, a practice repugnant to most civilised people, confiscating all their property and possessions. I was, however, pleased to note the representative of the Baathist entity's assurance, that the Jews of Iraq were and are considered by his authorities as having the same rights and duties as all other Iraqi citizens and his implied recognition of the valuable contribution to the land of their sojourn over 2.500 years.

This positive attitude raises hopes that Iraq may yet accept its responsibility for paying compensation to the 140.000 Jews it expelled, not only for their personal property and their extensive communal properties. **For surely, having contributed so much more than their share to Iraq's national wealth, the Iraqi Jews are entitled to a part thereof, at the very least to a part proportional to their numbers. As citizens with equal rights and duties in every respect, as the Iraqi delegate pointed out, a claim might even be justified for some territorial compensation to which they might have a claim, equal to an area of Iraq which would be in proportion to the ratio of the Jewish community to the general population of Iraq at the time of its expulsion.**

I can therefore well understand the Iraqi representative's concern that Resolution 242 covers Jewish as well as Arab refugees, whilst noting with satisfaction his interest in this Resolution of which, at least up to now, Iraq has not been one of the staunchest supporters. It is not only Israel, but also the United States, which as we all know, played an important part in the framing of Resolution 242, which recognizes that Resolution 242 also applies to Jews from Arab lands. This position found formal expression in the 5 October 1977 U.S.-Israel Working Paper, agreed upon in anticipation of the resumption of the Geneva Conference. It was also included in a statement by President Carter, made, I believe, on the 22 October 1977.

I am somewhat surprised at the vehemence of the Iraqi representative's objection to my reference to Western Palestine in describing the area of Palestine lying to the West of the

Jordan River. This is both a historic and a geographic fact. All of today's Jordan was included in the area referred to as Palestine by the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations' Mandate and indeed, all citizens of Transjordan carried Palestinian passports till 1946. It was the British who divided up Palestine, giving over 3/4 of it to the Palestinian Arabs and the remaining part to the Jews for their National Home. Quoting recently released Foreign Office records, Mr. Martin Gilbert, the official biographer of Winston Churchill, writes of an agreement between King Feisal, who was then not only the ruler of Iraq, but also the undisputed head of the Arab nationalist movement, and Lawrence, under which the Zionists gave up their rights to settle in Palestine East of the Jordan, whilst Feisal, in the name of the Hashemites gave up in perpetuity all Arab claims to the area assigned to the Jewish National Home West of the Jordan. This was the genesis of the creation of the Jewish Palestinian State of Israel and the Arab Palestinian State of Jordan.

Regarding the intervention of the distinguished representative of Tunisia in the debate, he doubtlessly speaks with some authority. For was it not Tunisia which nationalized the property, dispossessed and later expelled their French and Italian minorities, though most of them had lived in Tunisia for 2 or 3 generations ?

It is unfortunately the normal practice of many Arab speakers to be mindful only of their rights to the exclusion of those of others.

They had the right to make war on Israel and the United Nations, and the right not to accept its verdict; they had the right to call on the Arabs of Palestine to leave their homes and the right to demand they should all return, they had the right to try to destroy Israel and the right to demand that it should withdraw from defensible borders, they had the right to accept one paragraph from a United Nations resolution and to reject its 14 other paragraphs. I could go on. But isn't it time for these Arab spokesmen to consider also their duties ? And high up the list of those duties I would mention the duty to solve urgently the human problems of the refugees and to give them a chance for a normal life, and the duty to join without delay in the peace process which has at long last commenced in the Middle East.