

UNDERSTANDING
The **Nakba**
THE CATASTROPHE



Palestinian Arab refugees



Jewish refugees from the Arab world

REFUGEES OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT



Palestinian Arab refugees, 1948

INTRODUCTION

On May 15 of each year, Palestinians observe “Nakba Day.” “Nakba” is Arabic for “catastrophe.” This is how many Palestinians describe the founding of the State of Israel, Israel’s victory against invading Arab forces in the 1948 war, and the subsequent refugee crisis.

There were an estimated 500,000 to 750,000 Palestinian Arab refugees. Most fled to escape the war, which was launched by Arab forces. A minority were expelled by Israeli forces or left because Arab leaders encouraged them to do so.

The refugees suffered personal and collective traumas that remain central to Palestinian identity to this day. This suffering was made worse by Arab states, which used the refugees as political weapons in the conflict with Israel.

Another group also became refugees in the aftermath of the 1948 war. An estimated 850,000 Jews living in Arab states fled or were expelled. Arab governments engaged in brutal retaliation against these Jewish communities after Israel’s victory in 1948, even though their Jewish citizens lived far from the war zone and had virtually no involvement in the fighting.

The Jews fled from Arab states in the 1950s and 1960s, so by the 1970s, only 1 percent of the Jewish population remained in Arab states. By the 1980s most Jews were gone from Iran as well. For the Jews from Arab states and Iran, this, too, was a catastrophe.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Over 3,000 years ago, the Jewish people built a thriving civilization and culture in the land of Israel. Over time they were conquered by a series of foreign empires. In 70 CE, the Roman Empire crushed the Jewish kingdom of Judea in response to a Jewish rebellion. After Roman legions mercilessly crushed another Jewish uprising in 135 CE, Rome changed the name of Judea to the province of Syria-Palaestina.

While some Jews remained in their homeland in communities like Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tiberius as well as throughout the Galilee, most gradually scattered across the Middle East and Europe. Those who remained became a minority in their own land, which would eventually be conquered and colonized by various Christian and Islamic empires.

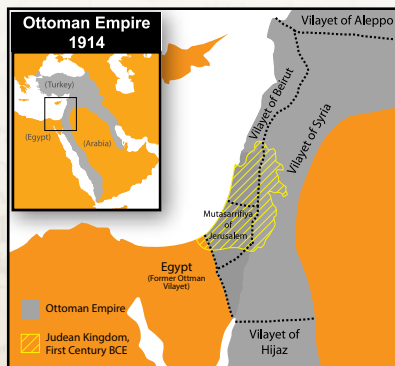
Although Jews flourished in certain times and places outside of Israel, they endured centuries of persecution and brutal violence. In the late 1800s, Jews started the Zionist movement, hoping to overcome the oppression they faced in Europe and the Middle East by creating a free, independent nation in their ancestral home. They began moving back to Palestine, where the ancient kingdom of Judea once stood, joining Jews who were already there and building new communities.

From 1517 to 1917, Palestine was divided into several districts within the Islamic Ottoman Empire. It was inhabited by a mix of Arabs, Bedouins, Jews, Turks, and other groups. Arabs were the majority. Many arrived with various conquering empires over the centuries, while others were descended from locals who had converted from Judaism and Christianity.

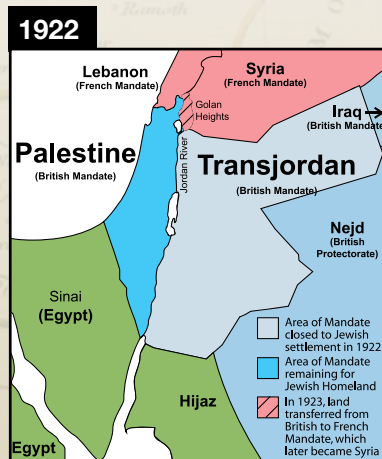
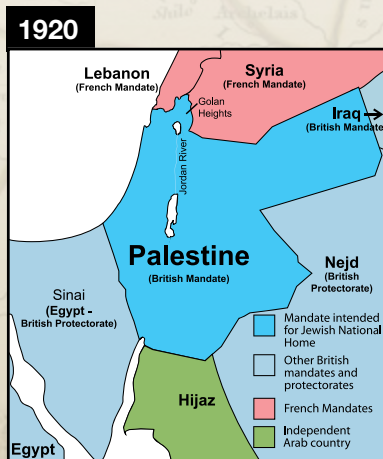


Iraqi Jews at a refugee camp in Israel, c. 1950

Some Arabs also immigrated in the 19th and 20th centuries to pursue economic opportunities, including those created by the growing Zionist movement. Though Jews were a minority, they had maintained an unbroken, continuous presence in the land for 3,000 years and were the largest ethnic group in the city of Jerusalem by 1860. With a total population of roughly 300,000, there was more than enough room in Palestine to create a Jewish state without displacing Arabs or others.



Under Ottoman rule, the former lands of the Judean kingdom were broken up into various provinces and did not constitute a single political unit.



In the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Britain endorsed “Zionist aspirations” to reestablish the Jewish homeland in Palestine and promised to “facilitate” the effort. In 1920, the League of Nations adopted this and turned it into international law. In 1922 Britain cut off 77 percent of the Palestine Mandate to Jewish immigration, giving the land to a powerful Arab clan called the Hashemites. This would become the nation of Jordan. In 1923, Britain gave the Golan Heights to the French Mandate of Syria.

In 1920, three years after the British defeated the Ottomans (who sided with Germany) in World War I, the League of Nations (an early version of the UN) established the British Mandate of Palestine. The terms of the Mandate officially recognized the rights of the Jewish people in their homeland. Britain was required to govern the territory and help Jews create a “national home” while protecting the rights of all other groups living there.

However, by that time Arabs developed a nationalist movement of their own, and their leaders strongly opposed Jewish immigration and self-determination in Palestine. Initially, they demanded the creation of a large Arab state combining Syria and Palestine (referring to Palestine as “Southern Syria”). Later, they shifted focus to demanding an exclusively Arab state in Palestine alone.

As such, the Arab–Israeli conflict began as a clash between Zionists, who wanted to create a Jewish state in their ancestral home (with backing from the League of Nations), and Arab nationalists, who saw Jews as foreign colonizers and insisted that all of Palestine should be another Arab state. The first shots were fired in 1920, when Haj Amin al-Husseini—a Palestinian Arab leader appointed by the British authorities—incited violence against Jews in Jerusalem. Similar attacks ensued in 1921 and 1929, when the Jews of Hebron were massacred and forced to flee their homes.

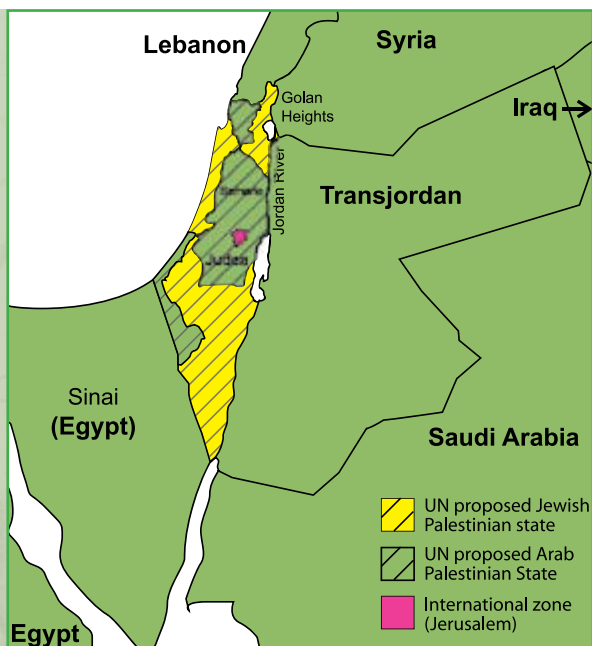


Scenes from the aftermath of the Hebron massacre

In the decade that followed, the conflict escalated further. Jewish leaders expressed a willingness to negotiate and split Palestine, despite being promised the entire territory for their national home by the League of Nations. However, Arab leaders rejected the creation of a Jewish state in any part of the land.

In 1939, on the eve of World War II, when Jewish refugees from Europe were desperately searching for an escape from Nazi oppression, the British government turned fully against Zionism in order to appease Arab nationalists. It issued a “White Paper” that effectively blocked Jewish immigration to Palestine while denying Jewish refugees’ entry to Britain itself. As a result, millions of Jews were trapped in Europe, vulnerable to the Nazi genocide.

The conflict came to a head in 1947 when the UN proposed a two-state solution, calling for the creation of a Jewish state and an Arab state. Jewish leaders accepted the compromise, but Arab leaders rejected it and launched a civil war to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.



*The United Nations partition plan,
rejected by Arab leaders in 1947*

*ALA armored car with
its emblem, a dagger stabbing
a Jewish Star of David*



By Valleyofdown - originally uploaded as
File:Arab Liberation Army.svg, version 20:03, 5
October 2010, its source is <http://www.wyenet.co.il/>
PicServer2/02022009/2084251/12-Zklarts_043
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Outside forces, including the Arab Liberation Army (ALA), entered the Mandate and attacked Jewish communities, laying siege to Jerusalem's 100,000 Jews, who nearly starved to death. The ALA was led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji, who had been a colonel in Nazi Germany's army during World War II.¹

On April 16, 1948, Jamal al-Husseini, the Palestinian Arab representative to the UN, told the UN Security Council:

“The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that we were going to fight.”²



Jamal al-Husseini

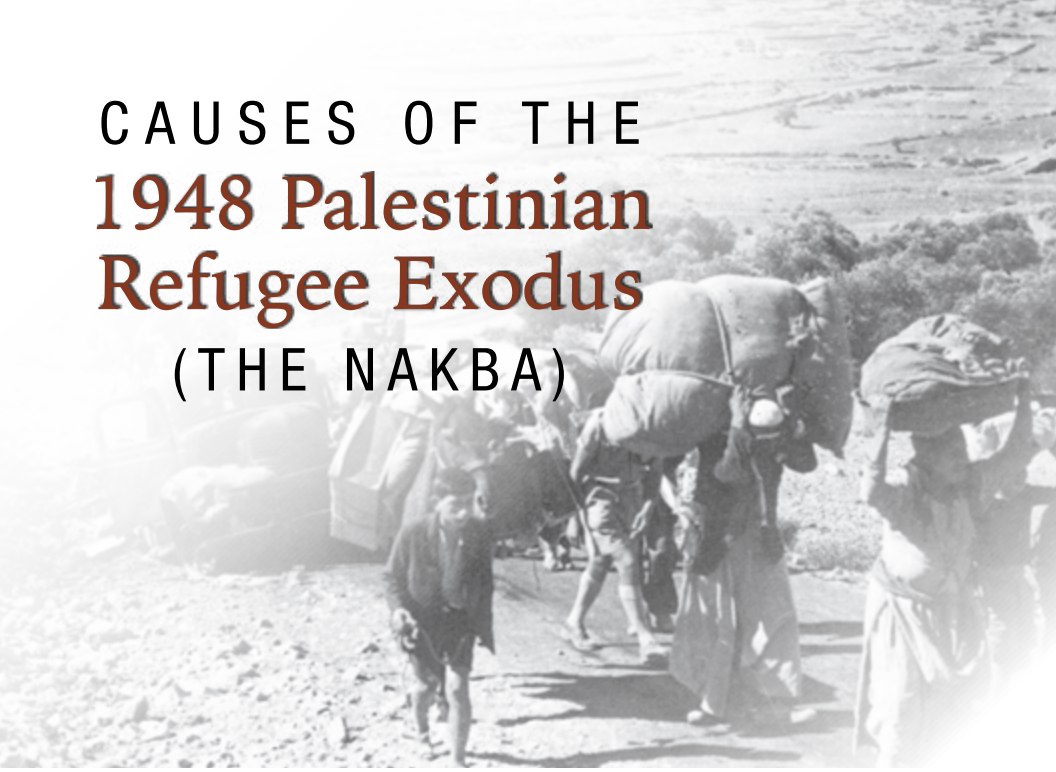
Amidst this civil war, on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared independence. The next day, May 15, 1948, five Arab states invaded Israel with the declared intention of destroying it. Hence, the date chosen for Nakba Day (May 15) is the anniversary of a massive invasion by Arab forces. The decision by Arab and Palestinian leaders to launch this war of aggression was catastrophic. It left thousands dead on both sides, and it led to between 500,000 to 750,000 Palestinian Arabs and over 850,000 Jews from Arab states becoming refugees.³

—Azzam Pasha, Arab League
Secretary-General ⁴

— Trygve Lie,
UN Secretary-General 5



CAUSES OF THE 1948 Palestinian Refugee Exodus (THE NAKBA)



Many Palestinian nationalists falsely claim that once the UN voted for the compromise partition plan, “Zionist gangs” immediately began expelling Palestinians in a premeditated plan.⁶ Reality, however, is far more complex.

According to historian Benny Morris, “transfer or expulsion was never adopted by the Zionist movement or its main political groupings as official policy at any stage of the movement’s evolution—not even in the 1948 War.”⁷ Indeed, 165,000 Palestinian Arabs chose to remain in Israel and became citizens. The rest became refugees due to a variety of factors.

“[T]he Palestine refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a byproduct of Jewish and Arab fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterized the first Israeli–Arab war; in smaller part it was the deliberate creation of Jewish and Arab military commanders and politicians.”⁸

—Prof. Benny Morris

THE MAIN REASONS PALESTINIAN ARABS FLED

Palestinian Arab leaders were among the first to flee—even before the war.

From *A Concise History of the Arab–Israeli Conflict* by Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner: “Just at the time when they were needed most, many of the local mayors, judges, communal, and religious officials fled ... once the landlords and other leaders had made good their own escape—as they did from Haifa, Jaffa, Safed, and elsewhere—the Arab townspeople, villagers, and peasants were left helpless.”⁹

Refugees fled heavy fighting in populated areas.

This was a civil war, and combat occurred everywhere. Palestinian Arabs were able to flee to safety in Arab territories. Israeli Jews, on the other hand, literally had their backs to the sea with no place to take refuge.

Arab radio stations broadcast exaggerated accounts and false rumors of Jewish atrocities.

According to Hazem Nusseibeh, an editor at the Palestine Broadcasting Service in 1948, “We weren’t sure the Arab armies for all their talk were really going to come. We thought to shock the population of the Arab countries to stir pressures against their governments.”¹⁰ The broadcasts however, had the opposite effect. Nusseibeh explained to the BBC 50 years later, “This was our biggest mistake. We did not realize how our people would react ... Palestinians fled in terror.”¹¹ This is corroborated by another source, refugee Yunes Ahmed Assad, who told a Jordanian newspaper in 1953, “The Arab exodus from other villages was not caused by the actual battle, but by the exaggerated description spread by Arab leaders to incite them to fight the Jews.”¹²

REASONS WHY A MINORITY OF REFUGEES LEFT

Overconfident Arab leaders encouraged them to leave.

“Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves are the ones who encouraged them to leave. Only a few months separated our call to them to leave and our appeal to the United Nations to resolve on their return.”¹³

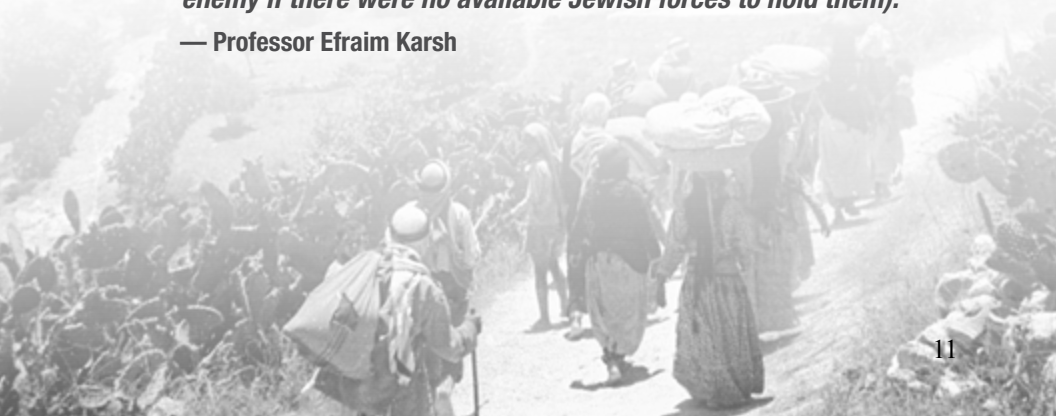
— Haled al-Azm, Syrian Prime Minister, 1948–1949

Israeli troops encouraged or forced people to leave, particularly from areas that Arab forces used for attacks.

An example is the infamous and tragic case of Deir Yassin, which occurred in the context of an Israeli effort to break the Arab siege of Jerusalem, which had put 100,000 Jews at risk of starvation. Deir Yassin was an Arab village that Arab troops used as a base for attacks. Israeli forces attempted to capture the village, leading to a battle in which many Palestinian Arab civilians were killed, and all residents were expelled.

“Israeli forces did on occasion expel Palestinians. But this accounted for only a small fraction of the total exodus, occurred not within the framework of a premeditated plan but in the heat of battle, and was dictated predominantly by ad hoc military considerations (notably the need to deny strategic sites to the enemy if there were no available Jewish forces to hold them).”¹⁴

— Professor Efraim Karsh



ATROCITIES, EXPULSIONS OF JEWS BY ARAB FORCES DURING THE 1948 WAR

According to Morris, there were expulsions of Jews during the war as well:

“Palestinian militiamen who fought alongside the Arab Legion consistently expelled Jewish inhabitants and razed conquered sites. ... All the Jewish settlements conquered by the invading Jordanian, Syrian, and

Egyptian armies ... were razed after their inhabitants had fled or been incarcerated or expelled.”¹⁵

In the case of the Etzion Bloc, the Jewish defenders were massacred as they were surrendering.¹⁶

In Jerusalem’s ancient Jewish Quarter, all Jews who survived the fighting were expelled by the Transjordanian Arab Legion.¹⁷

Aftermath of 1948

After 1948, Jordan illegally occupied Judea, Samaria, and eastern Jerusalem. It renamed these areas the “West Bank” because they are west of the Jordan River. Jordanian authorities prohibited Jews from visiting their holiest sites in Jerusalem for 19 years. This lasted until Jordan attacked Israel in the 1967 war and Israeli forces fought back and took control of the city.

Meanwhile, most Palestinian Arab refugees were not allowed to return to their homes after the bitter fighting ended in 1949. Israel offered to take in families that had been separated during the war, pay compensation for any loss of private land, and absorb 100,000 refugees in return for peace. Arab states rejected this offer, hoping they would be able to defeat and destroy Israel in the years to come.¹⁸

THE ROLE OF Antisemitism IN THE PALESTINIAN AND JEWISH REFUGEE CRISES

According to Morris, “For the Palestinians, from the start, the clash with the Zionists was a zero-sum game. The Palestinian national movement’s leader during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Haj Amin al-Husseini, consistently rejected territorial compromise.”¹⁹ This extremism was a key component that led to the 1948 war. In March 1948, al-Husseini said the Arabs did not intend merely to prevent partition but “would continue fighting until the Zionists were annihilated and the whole of Palestine became a purely Arab state.”²⁰

During World War II, al-Husseini was the acknowledged political and religious leader of the Palestinian Arabs and arguably “the most popular figure in the Arab-Islamic world of the time.”²¹ He formed an open alliance with Nazi Germany,²² met Hitler, and was placed under Heinrich Himmler, “the key and senior Nazi official responsible for conceiving and overseeing implementation of the so-called Final Solution, the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of Europe.”²³

With Himmler’s backing, al-Husseini recruited a Bosnian Muslim SS division to fight anti-fascist partisans in Yugoslavia. In one instance, al-Husseini used his relationship with Nazi officials to prevent 4,000 Jewish children and 500 adults from escaping the Nazis—all were murdered.²⁴



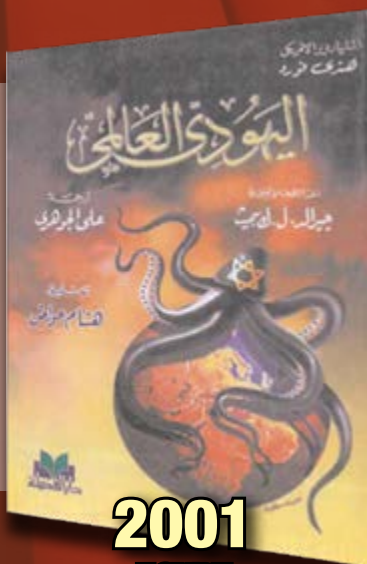
*The Mufti al-Husseini meets
SS Commandant Heinrich Himmler.*

(Source: German Federal Archive)

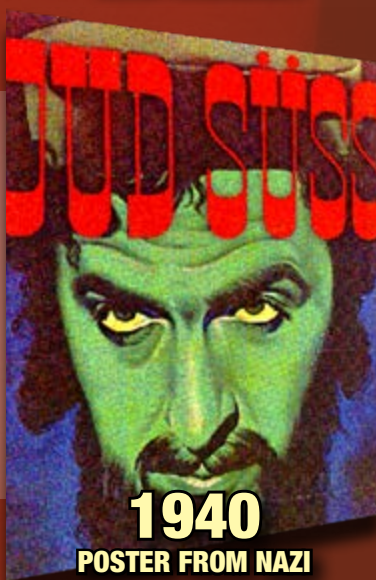
FROM 1937 TO 1945 AL-HUSSEINI PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN SPREADING NAZI ANTISEMITISM THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE EAST, INTRODUCING A NEW FORM OF RACIST PROPAGANDA THAT PERSISTS IN THE REGION TO THIS DAY.²⁵



1938
NAZI GERMANY



2001
EGYPT



1940
POSTER FROM NAZI
ANTISEMITIC FILM
JUD SÜSS
("SÜSS THE JEW")



2010
SECOND PRIZE WINNER IN
CARTOON CONTEST
SPONSORED BY BADIL,
A PALESTINIAN NGO



Palestinian leader Haj Amin al-Husseini meets Hitler.

(Source: German Federal Archive)

At their November 28, 1941, meeting, Hitler promised al-Husseini:

“Germany’s only remaining objective in the region would be limited to the annihilation of the Jews living under British protection in Arab lands.”²⁶

The Nazis imprisoned Tunisian Jews in forced labor camps (about 4,000 died) and prepared death squads to annihilate the Jews of Palestine and the rest of the region. Only Germany’s defeat in North Africa prevented them from carrying out their plan.²⁷

After the war, al-Husseini returned to the Middle East and agitated the Arab world for war against the emerging Jewish state.²⁸

“Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history, and religion.”²⁹

—Haj Amin al-Husseini on Nazi Radio Berlin’s Arabic Program

THE CATASTROPHE OF Jewish Refugees FROM ARAB LANDS

Haj Amin al-Husseini's wartime and post-war campaigning for war and violence contributed to numerous massacres against Jewish communities in Arab countries, hundreds of miles from Palestine.

EXAMPLES OF MASSACRES OF JEWS IN ARAB COUNTRIES LEADING TO THEIR FLIGHT AND EXPULSION

JUNE 1941: IRAQ

Al-Husseini used his ties with the Germans to promote Nazi propaganda in Iraq. The result was a short-lived pro-Nazi coup and the massacre of about 200 Jews from June 1 to June 2, 1941. Iraqi Jews call this the Farhud.³⁰

NOVEMBER 2 – 3, 1945: EGYPT

Five Jews were murdered, hundreds injured in mass anti-Jewish rioting.

NOVEMBER 5 – 7, 1945: LIBYA

Over 140 Libyan Jews were murdered, including 36 children; hundreds injured; much property damaged in mass anti-Jewish rioting.³¹

DECEMBER 1947: SYRIA

Thirteen Jews were murdered in Damascus (including 8 children), 26 injured. Anti-Jewish rioters in Aleppo wounded dozens of Jews, damaged 150 Jewish homes, and set fire to five schools and ten synagogues.³²

JUNE – SEPTEMBER 1948: EGYPT

Series of bombings in Cairo killed 70 Jews, wounded over 200.³³ Rioters murdered 44 Jews and wounded 150 others.³⁴ Eighty-two Jews were murdered in mass anti-Jewish rioting; scores injured.³⁵

In the 20th century, the twin forces of pan-Arab nationalism and Islamist extremism brought the complete demise of Jewish communities in Arab states.³⁶

After Israel declared its independence in 1948, Arab regimes, coordinated by the Arab League, enacted racist legislation that denied human and civil rights to Jews. These regimes also arbitrarily arrested, detained, tortured, and expelled Jews. Finally, incitement to violence often led to massacres of hundreds of Jews, causing more to flee.^{37, 38} In many cases the refugees were not allowed to leave freely and had to escape during the night or under false pretenses.

These coordinated, discriminatory laws³⁹ had the following effect.

► **Stripping Jews of Citizenship**

BY ALL ARAB COUNTRIES EXCEPT LEBANON AND TUNISIA

► **Arrests and Detentions**

BY ALL ARAB COUNTRIES EXCEPT LEBANON AND TUNISIA

► **Religious Restrictions**

BY ALGERIA, EGYPT, MOROCCO, TUNISIA, YEMEN

► **Criminalization of Zionism**

BY EGYPT, IRAQ, LEBANON, LIBYA, MOROCCO, SYRIA

► **Restricting Freedom of Movement**

BY IRAQ, LIBYA, MOROCCO, SYRIA, YEMEN

► **Employment Discrimination and Job Termination**

JEWS WERE FIRED AND/OR BANNED FROM CERTAIN CAREERS IN
EGYPT, IRAQ, LEBANON, MOROCCO, SYRIA, YEMEN

► **Freezing of Jewish Assets**

BY ALL ARAB COUNTRIES EXCEPT MOROCCO

► **Confiscation of Jewish-owned Property**

BY ALL ARAB COUNTRIES EXCEPT MOROCCO

In the years after 1948, *all* Jewish communities of the Arab world and Iran were virtually emptied of their populations. Some of these communities existed long before Arab Islamic armies conquered and colonized the Middle East and parts of Europe, beginning in the seventh century CE.

COUNTRY	1948 JEWISH POPULATION	2016 JEWISH POPULATION
Algeria	140,000	50
Bahrain	600	36
Egypt	80,000	100
Iran	100,000	9,000
Iraq	150,000	0
Lebanon	20,000	200
Libya	38,000	0
Morocco	265,000	2,300
Sudan	350	0
Syria	30,000	100
Tunisia	105,000	1,100
Yemen	55,000	50
TOTAL	983,950	12,936

SOURCES: 1948: Peter N. Stearns (editor), *Encyclopedia of World History* (6 ed.), The Houghton Mifflin Company / Bartleby.com; 2016: Sergio DellaPergola (editor), *World Jewish Population 2016*, No. 17, 2016, Berman Jewish DataBank in cooperation with the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (reprinted from the *American Jewish Yearbook* 2016)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) determined that Jews fleeing from Arab countries were refugees who fell within the mandate of the UNHCR.

“Another emergency problem is now arising: that of [Jewish] refugees from Egypt. There is no doubt in my mind that those refugees from Egypt who are not able, or not willing to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of their nationality fall under the mandate of my office.”⁴⁰

—Dr. Auguste Lindt, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 1957

“I refer to our recent discussion concerning Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries in consequence of recent events. I am now able to inform you that such persons may be considered prima facie within the mandate of this Office.”⁴¹

—Dr. E. Jahn, Office of the UN High Commissioner, UNHCR, 1967



PALESTINIAN AND JEWISH Refugees Today

The key difference between the Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Palestinian refugees is that today the Jews are no longer refugees. This is because all have been resettled (mostly in Israel) and granted citizenship. Their refugee status ended generations ago.

This stands in stark contrast to the plight of four generations of Palestinians designated “refugees” by the United Nations. They are refused citizenship in almost all Arab countries, where they face systematic discrimination in employment, housing, health care, and more.

Jordan is an exception, as 1.6 million Palestinian refugees there have Jordanian citizenship. They live alongside millions of other Palestinians, making up the majority of Jordan’s population. Yet they are still defined as “refugees” by the UN.⁴²

Although some Palestinians have a comfortable standard of living in the West Bank, Palestinian leaders have neglected the refugee camps under their jurisdiction, leaving many of their people



“Ramallah at night”

by Heinrich Böll Foundation Palestine & Jordan,
<https://ftic.kr/p/v54bY6>, CC BY 2.0



*Entrance to Aida Camp,
 a Palestinian refugee camp*

impoverished for generations. While there are no more tents, the “camps” essentially became urban slums. This has helped fuel hatred and violence rather than building toward a sustainable Palestinian state, living side by side, in peace, with Israel.

In Gaza, Palestinians in refugee areas live under the brutally oppressive rule of the terrorist organization Hamas. They suffer immensely from frequent outbreaks of violence between Israel and Hamas (along with other terrorist groups), as Israel tries to stop rockets and other attacks against its civilian population.

In eastern Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees were offered Israeli citizenship in 1967, but most refused for political reasons. They have residency status in Israel, which allows them to work, vote in city elections, and travel freely anywhere in the country. However, due to pressure from the Palestinian Authority (PA), most do not vote and thus lack full representation in the Jerusalem city government. At the same time, Israeli officials acknowledge that they have not allocated enough resources to Palestinian areas of eastern Jerusalem and that more must be done to close the gaps.⁴³



THE UN ESTABLISHED TWO REFUGEE AGENCIES, ONLY ONE YEAR APART



In 1950, the UN established the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assist the nearly 60 million refugees of WWII.

The UNHCR's "primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees." It is "mandated by the United Nations to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems."⁴⁴

Once a refugee gains citizenship in another country, he or she loses refugee status.⁴⁵ Children of refugees are eligible for refugee status but must meet a set of strict guidelines.⁴⁶

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in 1949 specifically to assist the estimated 500,000 to 750,000 Arab Palestinians displaced by the 1947 to 1949 Arab-Israeli war.



UNRWA uses a definition unique to Palestinians: "Palestine refugees are defined as 'persons whose regular place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.'"

Refugee status is inherited automatically. UNRWA's website states: "The descendants of Palestine refugee *males, including adopted children*, are also eligible for registration as refugees"⁴⁷ (emphasis added).

**Palestinian refugees have been
treated differently, perpetuating the Nakba.**



5.4 MILLION

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

Today, UNRWA has 5.4 million Palestinians registered as “refugees.” Some 2.2 million of them live in Jordan, and 1.6 million hold Jordanian citizenship.

Moreover, unlike other refugee populations, most Palestinians defined by UNRWA as refugees are third-, fourth-, and even

“The scandal, then, is ... through inaction, refugee status is allowed to persist from generation to generation. For UNRWA Refugees, refugee status persists solely because UNRWA pretends persons who are protected by a state (the oxymoronic ‘citizen refugees’) are still refugees and, for those who really are refugees, refuses to make any effort to end their refugee status, as (in the absence of the possibility of repatriation) by resettlement or local integration.”⁴⁸

—James G. Lindsay
UNRWA General Counsel (2000–2007)
Who Oversaw All UNRWA Legal Activities

fifth-generation descendants of those who fled during the 1948 war. So, someone born today can be a refugee from a war 70 years ago.

Unlike the UNHCR, UNRWA does not have an active program for “local integration” of refugees where they now reside nor “resettlement” in third countries, which leaves Palestinians in an unacceptable and indefinite state of limbo.

UNRWA

PALESTINIAN ⁴⁹

VS

UNHCR

ALL OTHERS ⁵¹

5.4 Million	REFUGEES SERVED	70.8 Million
\$1.19 Billion IN 2018 ⁵⁰ \$220 PER REFUGEE	FUNDS SPENT	\$8.6 Billion IN 2019 \$121 PER REFUGEE
5	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WHERE AGENCIES OPERATE	134
STAFF: 30,000 1 STAFF PER 180 Refugees	STAFF	STAFF: 16,803 1 STAFF PER 4,213 Refugees
Still Registered as Refugees (Jordan)	STATUS ONCE GRANTED CITIZENSHIP IN A THIRD COUNTRY	Refugee Status Ends
RESULT Perpetuate Refugee Status for Generations FUELING ENDLESS CONFLICT	RESULT/GOAL	GOAL End Refugee Status

JEWISH AND OTHER REFUGEE CRISES FROM THE 1940s ALL RESOLVED



0 Refugees
AS OF 2019

World War II (1939 to 1945)

Resulted in **60 million** refugees.



0 Refugees
AS OF 2019

Partition of India (1947)

After the partition and subsequent war, which created modern India and Pakistan, **13 million Hindus and Muslims** became refugees. Some 2 million people were killed.⁵³ Today, Hindus are only 2 percent of Pakistan's population,⁵⁴ and Muslims are 14.2 percent of India's population.⁵⁵ All refugees were resettled: Hindus in India, Muslims in Pakistan.



0 Refugees

AS OF 2019

Expulsion of Ethnic Germans (1944 to 1950)

During and after World War II, the Soviet Union and its allies expelled **14 million ethnic Germans** from their centuries-old homes in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Ukraine. An estimated 500,000 died.⁵⁶ Almost all were resettled in West Germany.



0 Refugees

AS OF 2019

Expulsion of Jewish Communities from Ten Arab States (1948 to 1970)

Before, during, and after the 1948 Arab–Israeli war, Jews in ten Arab countries faced violence, discrimination, imprisonment, and confiscation of their properties. Some **850,000 Jews** fled as refugees. Today, 99 percent of these ancient Jewish communities no longer exist. Most were resettled in Israel.

The only unresolved war refugee crisis from this period is that of the Palestinian Arab refugees and their four-plus generations of descendants.

THEY DESERVE BETTER.



IT IS TIME TO End the Nakba

Not only is UNRWA's open-ended definition of "refugee" at odds with international law ("refugee status, as conceived in international law, is, in principle, a transitory phenomenon")⁵⁷ but it

is also a major obstacle to peace that plays a central role in fueling the Arab–Israeli conflict.

Palestinian leaders demand that all the descendants of the 1948 refugees be given a "right of return" to Israel rather than to a future Palestinian state. As President Obama and many others have noted, a "right of return" for millions of descendants of Palestinian refugees would eliminate Israel and end self-determination for the Jewish people. This is because Israeli Jews would immediately become a minority, living under Palestinian-majority rule.

Some argue that Palestinian refugees moving to Israel would lead to justice and peace. This ignores critical facts on the ground.

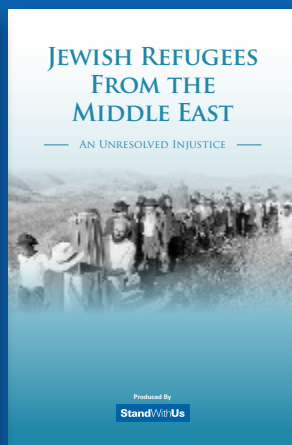
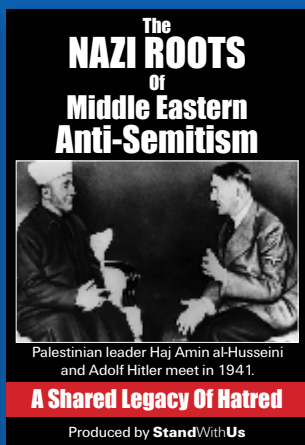
Jews lived as a minority under Arab rule for centuries, facing systematic discrimination and occasional periods of brutal violence and oppression. The factions that dominate Palestinian politics—Fatah and Hamas—both have long records of promoting vicious antisemitism and violence against Jews as well as destructive actions that have harmed all peoples in the region. Hussein Ibish of the American Task Force on Palestine adds,

“Existential fears, especially on the Israeli side, are greatly exacerbated by the political climate in the Middle East. ... It would be indefensible to assert that the contemporary Middle East enjoys a regional political climate favoring pluralism and equitable sectarian and ethnic power-sharing.”⁵⁸

The ethnic and sectarian conflicts of the region include the devastating Syrian civil war, the rise of ISIS, which committed a genocide against the non-Muslim Yazidis in Iraq and attacked Shi’ites, and ongoing strife in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. Tragically, the Middle East remains a dangerous place for ethnic and religious minorities.

Furthermore, demanding that Israel absorb millions of Palestinian refugees is deeply hypocritical. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has said that not a single Israeli will be allowed to live in a future Palestinian state, while Hamas continues to openly call for Israel’s destruction.

The heart of the conflict is that Palestinian leaders have never truly accepted the idea of two states for two peoples. For the conflict to end, they must stop promoting violence and propaganda against Israel, including the illusion that millions of Palestinian descendants of the original 1948 refugees will one day “return” to sovereign Israeli territory. It is long past time for Palestinian leaders to make the compromises needed for peace and start building a better future for their people.



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