

THE FORCED MIGRATION OF JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES AND PEACE

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Introduction

The various efforts for peace between Israelis and Palestinians have overlooked an important factor concerning the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The displacement of 850,000 Jews from Arab countries, the loss of all their assets and property, and the hardships accompanying their migration and emigration to Israel, constitute an aspect of the Middle East refugee problem which has been neglected. As almost half of the Jewish citizens of Israel, together with their descendants, are from Arab countries, peace research and future peace efforts should take this important part of the history of the conflict into account, and to address it, in all its complex aspects.

To be able to reach a peaceful solution to the Conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, this neglected part of history should be amply researched and duly addressed. The uprooted Jews from Arab countries in Israel feel that although the displacement of Palestinians is well documented and relatively well known, their own forced migration from Arab countries has been overlooked and this fact makes them rather intransigent toward a possible solution of the conflict that does not include their own heritage and history. Taking into account the forced migration of the Jews from the Arab countries as part of the tragedies incurred during this long and painful conflict, would give a better chance to peace.

These refugees from Arab countries, that constitute together with their descendants, almost half of the Jewish population in Israel (approximately 5 millions are Jews, and 1 million are Arab/Palestinians), are still angry and hurt that whereas the plight of the Palestinian immigrants is so well known and researched, their own tragic history has almost disappeared from history. They are therefore prone to hold rightist ideologies, and are more intransigent of a peaceful arrangement with their Palestinian neighbors, and the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The major motivation therefore behind this research and article is to placate both the Palestinians and the Jewish refugees from the Arab countries, by pointing out that their sufferings, problems and feelings of victimization have many common points, and that both sides share them. The article is also meant to inform the general public of a forgotten historical and moral aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict that has almost disappeared from history. It is suggested that to take into consideration the story of the Jewish immigration from Arab countries, and the various points and facts raised below, can facilitate the peace process, as it shows that there was forced migrations on both sides, and the claims of restitution of assets are on both sides, and should be both addressed.

The fact that a part of the Jews from Arab countries dreamt of Zion, prayed to Zion and wanted to come there, does not give the host countries where they were born and lived all their lives, the right to kick them out with nothing but their shirts on their backs. Most Jews from the Arab countries did not leave on their own volition, they were banished at short notice, and they were forced to leave all their possessions behind, which made

them paupers overnight. To this day, many of them suffer from this cruel and unjust uprooting and loss of all their assets.

In Israel for instance, most of them were sent to the poor and backward border towns and villages, such as Yeroham, near Beer Sheba, where the standard of living is lower than in the rest of Israel. The ignoring of their history as part and consequence of the Israeli-Arab Conflict makes them opt for rightist positions, and reinforce intransigent and extremist views. If their history and claims of restitution were taken into account (as those of the Palestinians), they would become more moderate and capable of identifying with the other side. After all, the Jews from the Arab countries, who constitute almost half of Israel, have the experience of living in relative harmony and well-being with the Arabs, before 1948, and if their own history were taken into account, they could again become an element of peace. Despite all their sufferings in their new land, none of them wants to return to their former homes in Arab countries.

The story of the Palestinian refugees is indeed different. The Arab countries did not integrate them, as Israel integrated the Jewish refugees from Arab countries, but kept them in refugee camps, most of them in Lebanon, to this day. All of them want to leave the refugee camps and return to their original homes, unfortunately in Israel. It is impossible for Israel to absorb 3 million Palestinian refugees, as Israel cannot be expected to commit suicide. There is indeed a serious problem to be solved, and this problem has to be solved in the framework of the Two States Solution, which would enable the Palestinian refugees to settle in Palestine. The promotion of the establishment of a Palestinian State can be enhanced by putting the claims of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries in the balance. This could placate and encourage both sides to favor the Two States Solution, and to the electing of Peace leaders on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. It is not a question of polemics, it is a historical, moral, and real politics question that deserves to be given immediate and serious attention, as well as further thorough research.

Forced Emigration of the Jews from Arab Countries

Starting in 1948, 856,000 Jewish refugees were uprooted in their hundreds of thousands from the lands of their birth in which they had dwelled for centuries prior to the Muslim conquest, that is, before the Arabs came from the Arabian desert to these regions in the 7th century A.D. Until the 10th century A.D., 90 percent of world Jewry lived in regions now known as the Arab countries.

In 1948 there were over 856,000 Jews living in the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa. By 1976, 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. These historic facts could be used to advance the Peace Process in the Middle East today, if they are presented and used in a positive way.

This sad and relatively abrupt end to some of the oldest Jewish settlements in the world, is in great part due to a 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, after the rise of the State of Israel in 1948. However, there were times when Jews enjoyed well-being and a degree of tolerance and protection under the law and in some instances even rose to prominence under Arab rule.

The declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 as an independent Jewish state, on the one hand marked the intensification of anti-Jewish measures in Arab countries, and on the other, as an opportunity to get rid of the Jews who wanted to flee, by 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 Jews in some Arab countries such as Syria and Yemen, are held as hostages to this day.

Conditions for Jews become unbearable

With the United Nations resolution on the partition of Palestine in November 1947, Arab riots broke out against numerous Jewish communities throughout the Arab world. Jewish shops, homes and synagogues were burned and looted; hundreds of Jews were murdered, thousands were imprisoned, their 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 confiscated. As in previous centuries, Jews were further removed from government agencies and their admission to public office was severely restricted. They lost their means of survival and became hostages in their own countries of birth and origin. Consequently, they could no longer remain there. Where once Jewish communities flourished and thrived, as in Iraq, Egypt and Syria, their traces have been erased, as Jews in large numbers were compelled to uproot and to emigrate, and they were forced to leave all their property behind.

The following table summarizes the dramatic disappearance of Jewish communities in the Arab world between 1948 and 1976¹.

**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	100,000	200
Iraq	135,000	400
Syria	30,000	4,350
Lebanon	5,000	150
Yemen	55,000	1,000
Aden	8,000	0

Total	881,000	25,620
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The Second Exodus

The vast immigration of Jews from the Arab countries has been termed "The Second Exodus"². 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 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. A total of 586,269 Jews from Arab countries arrived in Israel³ with at least 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. At least another 500,000 currently reside in France, Canada, the United States, Latin America and Australia.

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 Jews³.

In the early 50's the picture changed dramatically. By 1951, Jews from Arab countries made up nearly 30% of the entire population⁴. 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. During the years 1948 and 1951, nearly 50% of all immigrants, totaling 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 countries arriving in Israel rose to 69%⁵. In 1955 this group represented 92% of all immigrants. Approximately 100,000 came during those years from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia⁶.

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. 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 Land of Israel. The motivation of these early settlers was primarily Zionist and spiritual.

Jews arriving in Israel after 1948 were similarly inspired by the Zionist ideal of returning to their homeland. However, for the most part, they were forced to become refugees overnight, 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:

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

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

- Individual statistics for these countries were not recorded before 1950.

Jewish and Palestinian immigration

It is not generally known that the number of Palestinians who fled the newly formed State of Israel was surpassed by the number of Jews who were forced to emigrate from Arab countries. During the 1947 United Nations debates, the head of the Egyptian delegation warned that "the lives of a million Jews in Moslem countries will be jeopardized by the establishment of the Jewish State". Haj Amin el-Husseini, chairman of the Palestine Arab Higher Executive, told that body, "If a Jewish State were established in Palestine, the position of the Jews in the Arab countries would become very precarious". "Governments", he added ominously, "have always been unable to prevent mob excitement and violence". When the State of Israel was established, the Jews in the Arab countries became hated outcasts in their own lands, terrorized, imprisoned and often banished. This led to mass immigration of Jews who sadly realized there was no future for them in the land of their birth.

A review of the behavior of the various Arab countries toward their Jewish minorities reveals some difference.

Iraq

Less than a year after Israeli independence was declared in 1948, repressive measures were taken in Iraq. Thousands of Jews were imprisoned or taken into "protective custody" on charges of "Zionism". Jews applied in large numbers for exit permits to Israel, but legislation was quickly passed freezing Jewish bank accounts and forbidding Jews to dispose of their property without special permission. Jewish emigrants who succeeded in obtaining exit visas were allowed to take only fifty kilograms of luggage per person. Soon after, a decree was issued blocking the property of all Iraqi Jews who, by leaving the country, "had relinquished their nationality" and Jewish property was sold at public auction. A year later, laws were passed, restricting the movements of

Jews, barring them from schools, hospitals and other public institutions, and refusing them import and export licenses to carry on their businesses. The program was so effective, that by the middle of July 1950 more than 110,000 Iraqi Jews had registered for emigration.

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

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 several anti-Jewish riots. Jewish property was confiscated and Zionism, the wish to return to the Land of Zion, 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 became to be known as "Operation Ezra and Nehemia".

Few Jews remain in Iraq and those who do, mainly because they have not succeeded to escape, are continuously threatened with harassment by local officials or put on forced shows in their own synagogues by the Saddam Hussein regime.

Yemen

Jews had begun to leave Yemen in the 1880s, when some 2,500 had made their way to Jerusalem and Jaffa. But it was after World War I, when Yemen became independent, that anti-Jewish feeling in that country made emigration imperative. Anti-Semitic laws, which had lain dormant for years were revived, as for example: Jews were not permitted to walk on pavements - or to ride horses. In court, a Jew's evidence was not accepted against that of a Moslem. Jewish orphans had to be converted to Islam, and anyone who helped such children to escape did so on pain of death. When a Jew immigrated, he had to leave all his property. In spite of this, between 1923 and 1945 a total of 17,000 Yemenite Jews left and immigrated to Palestine⁷.

After the Second World War, thousands of more Yemenite Jews wanted to come to Palestine, but the British Mandate's White Paper was still in force and those who left Yemen ended up in crowded slums in Aden, where serious riots broke out in 1947 after the United Nations decided on partition. Many Jews were killed, and the Jewish quarter was burned to the ground. It was not until September 1948 that the British authorities in Aden allowed the refugees to proceed to Israel. The Egyptians had closed the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran to Israeli vessels, so the immigrants had to be airlifted to the new nation.

By March 1949, most of the Yemenite refugees in Aden had been brought to Israel, through "Operation Magic Carpet" the dramatic airlift, which brought 48,818 Yemenite Jews to Israel. It is another example of the displacement of an entire Jewish community from its ancient roots in the Arab countries. It is estimated, there are about 1,000 Jews in Yemen today. They are held as hostages, and are kept in dire conditions and not allowed to leave.

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. More than a hundred Jews were murdered, the Grand 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.

Egypt

The 1947 Egyptian census reported 65,639 Jewish residents of that country, many of them in finances and liberal professions: engineers, lawyers, doctors and teachers. However, Jewish estimates ran as high as 100,000. Today there are only about 200 Jewish residents left in Egypt. When Egypt joined the 1948 invasion of Israel, it also promulgated anti-Jewish decrees, taking severe measures against those suspected of "Zionist" activities, including imprisonment in concentration camps in Huckstep and in El Tor in the Sinai desert. Jewish property was confiscated and hundreds of Jewish families were banished and dispossessed. Homes were bombed and many Jews were killed or wounded. A mob attacked the Jewish quarter of Cairo, killing a great number of Jews and looting their houses and shops. By November 1950, more than half the Jews had left the country; and most of them made new lives in Israel. Like the Iraqi and Syrian Jews, the Jews of Egypt had been a prosperous and rich community with assets in millions of dollars. When they were forced to uproot themselves, they lost everything.

In 1956 the Egyptians undertook ruthless economic and political measures aimed specifically at the Jews in their midst. Many leaders of the large Egyptian-Jewish community were arrested, led through the streets of Cairo and Alexandria, and some were stoned. Jewish families who had resided in Egypt for generations but had not been granted citizenship, were evicted. Only 5% of the Jews of Egypt had been allowed to become Egyptian citizens, the others were "Apatride" - with no citizenship at all, in the land of their birth. A government order was read in the mosques that Jews were to be regarded as "enemies". (In 1967, 600 Jews were imprisoned, beaten and held for long periods without food or water.) We hear that such slogans are again used in mosques today, all over the Middle East, even in Israel.

Bank accounts were blocked, private and commercial property was confiscated, business firms were liquidated, and Jewish employees were discharged. Jewish department stores, bank and other businesses were confiscated and taken over, as were the Jewish schools, youth movements, old age homes, welfare institutions, hospitals and synagogues. Jewish judges and lawyers were expelled from the bar, and Jewish engineers, doctors and teachers were denied the right to practice. The Egyptian Medical Association instructed the population not to consult Jewish physicians and surgeons.

These ruthless measures brought the end of one of the oldest and most prosperous Jewish communities in the Middle East. It comprised the uprooting of Jews from the whole of Egypt, and especially from Cairo; Alexandria and Port Said, that had been

flourishing centers of a tolerant and rich Jewish life. Half of the Egyptian Jews emigrated to Israel, through France or Italy, and the other half are dispersed all over the world, like the Palestinians. Families were broken up and many hitherto prosperous people died of heart attacks when they realized, that all their wealth and property was confiscated by the (Egyptian) government, and that they had become paupers overnight.

Libya

The Jews of Libya had greatly suffered during the war years, for the country had been under Axis control and many Jews died in the concentration camps at Giado and at Auschwitz.

In November 1945, when anti-Jewish riots broke out in neighboring Egypt, a pogrom took place in Tripoli in which 130 Jews were murdered. In the wake of this violence, more than 31,000 Jews departed for Israel. The Libyan Jewish community, which numbered 38,000 in 1948, is an example of a community, which disappeared entirely. With the outbreak of anti-Jewish riots again in 1948, the Jewish community witnessed a wave of cruel pogroms resulting in the loss of many lives and vast property. In 1951 upon Libya's independence and membership in the Arab league, conditions worsened, and it brought much suffering to the Jews of Libya who had always been law-abiding, industrious and faithful citizens as the rest of the Jews from the Arab countries.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews were forced to leave en masse. The overwhelming majority, 35,612, immigrated to Israel, as many as 30,000 arriving by 1951. Illegal emigration through Italy started in 1949. 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.

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, and as with the other Arab countries, were forced to leave all their possessions behind. Today, Libya is "Judenrein" - "free of Jews".

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, and Jewish property was burned and looted. In 1949, banks were instructed to freeze the accounts of Jews and all their assets were expropriated.

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: and they are held as hostages in dire conditions. 3,000 live in Damascus, another 1,000 in Aleppo and 350 in Kamishli. The remaining Jews in Syria are denied free movement or any contact with the outside world. Those who have family in Israel are always in danger of persecution

by local officials, and several Jewish leaders and youths were tortured and hanged over the years.

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, Israel, Italy, England and South America, and some more for Israel in 1967.

In 1974, 1,800 Jews remained in Lebanon, the majority concentrated in Beirut. Today, during the civil war in Lebanon, its size has dwindled to an estimated 150 Jews.

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 businessmen, moneychangers, 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 inhabitants⁸. Other cities, which had large Jewish populations, were Marrakesh, Fez, Meknes and Rabat, each comprising a population of more than 15,000 Jews in 1947⁹.

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, 1949, riots broke out in northern Morocco killing and injuring dozens of Jews. Shortly afterwards, the Jews began to leave.

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 1966¹⁰.

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. Some representatives of the Israeli Knesset have lately been invited for peace talks in Rabat, by King Hassan and were well received.

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 Jewish of Algeria left the country, following the Evian Agreement, which granted independence to Algeria ¹⁰. Today, there remain merely 300 Jews.

During the struggle for independence, pressure was placed upon Jews to endorse the nationalistic 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, the existing government also harassed them. 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 ¹⁰.

Today, the few 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 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.

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 50,00 emigrated to Israel. In 1958, the Jewish Community Council was abolished. Today only 2,000 Jews remain in Tunisia.

Conclusion

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 other populations from other countries, on an unprecedented scale, made the displacement of Jews from Arab countries an inevitable consequence, and caused their forced migration.

Out of 856,000 Jews living in Arab countries in 1948, the majority found refuge from Arab persecution in Israel. The remaining Jews - just like the Palestinians, who were 650,000 in number when they fled from Israel or were ousted - were dispersed throughout the world. In the various countries that they inhabited previously, many had been wealthy and prestigious members of their prosperous and well-organized local Jewish communities. However, confronted with a political and social climate of

intensified and unbearable hostility, they were forcibly uprooted, and they were compelled to leave behind their public and private property. Consequently, the majority arrived in Israel without any means of their own.

After these tragic circumstances compelled them to leave, the Arab states did not hesitate to proclaim appropriate decrees designed to strip the Jews of their possessions. The Jewish assets, both individual and communal, that amount today to millions of dollars, were all sequestered, and are still held in the banks in various Arab countries, and their Jewish owners have been incapable to retrieve them to this day.

A more objective approach to both tragedies: of the Jews from Arab countries, as well as that of the Palestinians, and to the commonalities between them, can have a beneficial effect on the two populations. The Jews from Arab countries in Israel (the Sephardi), who will have their history and heritage restored to them and taken into account in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, would become more lenient and open to a peaceful arrangement. And the Palestinians would realize that they are not the only ones who have suffered, as in all conflicts both sides suffer, and this could make them more moderate and more prone to a reconciliation. This conciliatory effect on both sides could lead to a beneficial promotion of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as in the whole of the Middle East.

Biographical Note

Professor Ada Aharoni is a peace researcher and a cultural sociologist. She has conducted this present research at the Neaman Institute, the Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa. She has published 24 books, and more than 120 articles.

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NOTES

1. Based on: Official census of each country; yearbooks of the Jewish communities: The Jewish case before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 1946; Hayim Chohen, 1952 and 1973; David Sitton, 1974; Andre Chouraqui 1952; Joseph B. Shechtman, 1961; David Littman, 1975. (See Bibliography).

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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).
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