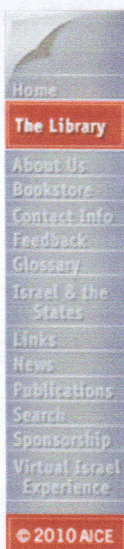


Appendix 7



JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

By Jacqueline Shields

Although much is heard about the plight of the [Palestinian refugees](#), little is said about the Jews who fled from Arab states. In 1945, there were more than 870,000 Jews living in the various [Arab states](#). Many of their communities dated back 2,500 years. Throughout 1947 and 1948 these Jews were persecuted. Their property and belongings were confiscated. There were anti-Jewish riots in [Egypt](#), [Lybia](#), [Syria](#), and [Iraq](#). In Iraq, [Zionism](#) was made a capital crime. Approximately 600,000 Jews sought refuge in the State of [Israel](#). They arrived destitute, but they were absorbed into the society and became an integral part of the state. In effect, then, a vertible exchange of populations took place between Arab and Jewish refugees. Thus, the Jewish refugees from Arab countries became full Israeli citizens whereas the Arab refugees who fled their homes in Palestine, remained "refugees" unaided by the neighboring Arab countries.

Little is heard about the Jewish refugees because they did not remain refugees for long. Of the 820,000 Jewish refugees, 586,000 were resettled in [Israel](#) at great expense, and without any offer of compensation from the Arab governments who confiscated their possessions. During the 1947 [UN](#) debates, Arab leaders threatened the Jews living in their countries with expulsion and violence if [partition](#) were to occur. Egypt's delegate told the General Assembly: "The lives of one million Jews in Muslim countries would be jeopardized by partition." Following the 1947 United Nations vote to partition Palestine, Arab violence against Jews erupted throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

On January 18, 1948, the president of the World Jewish Congress, [Dr. Stephen Wise](#), appealed to U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall: "Between 800,000 and a million Jews in the Middle East and North Africa, exclusive of Palestine, are in 'the greatest danger of destruction' at the hands of Moslems being incited to holy war over the Partition of Palestine. . . Acts of violence already perpetrated, together with those contemplated, being clearly aimed at the total destruction of the Jews, constitute genocide, which under the resolutions of the General Assembly is a crime against humanity." The United States, however, did not take action to investigate these pleadings.

On May 16, 1948, a *New York Times* Headline read "Jews in Grave Danger in all Muslim Lands: Nine Hundred Thousand in Africa and Asia face wrath of their foes." The story reported of a law drafted by the [Arab League](#) Political Committee "which was intended to govern the legal status of Jewish residents of Arab League countries. Their bank accounts would be frozen and used to finance resistance to 'Zionist ambitions in Palestine.' Jews believed to be active Zionists would be interned and their assets confiscated." Pogroms and persecutions, and grave fears for their future, regularly preceded the mass expulsions and exoduses of the Jews, whose ancestors had inhabited these regions from time immemorial. Beginning in 1948, more than 650,000 Jews left their homes in the Arab world to become refugees, and were eventually integrated into Israel, even as the country was being threatened with annihilation by neighboring Arab League states. Since their belongings were confiscated as the price of leaving from their repressive homelands, they arrived in Israel penniless, but they were welcomed and quickly absorbed into Israeli society. Approximately 300,000 more Jews found refuge, and a new homeland, in Europe and the Americas.

The mass displacement of the Jews from Arab countries has been a breach of international law. The 1945 Nuremberg Charter made wartime mass deportation a crime against humanity, and the 1949 [Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Civilians in Time of War](#) also prohibits deportations and forcible transfers, whether mass or individual. Decrees and practices discriminating against Jews in Arab countries, especially denationalization, is eerily similar to the [Nazi Nuremberg Laws](#) on Citizenship and Race, and the victims are the same, the Jews.

Roughly half of Israel's 5 million Jews are Jewish refugees from Arab countries or their descendants, and they received no humanitarian aid from the [United Nations](#). To this day, the Arab states have refused to pay any compensation to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were forced to abandon their property before fleeing their homelands. Israel has consequently maintained that any agreement to compensate the Palestinian refugees must also include Arab compensation for Jewish refugees.

The Treatment of Jews in Arab Countries Prior to Expulsion

SYRIA

Jews had lived in [Syria](#) since biblical times. The Jewish population of the area increased significantly after the [expulsion of the Jews](#) from [Spain](#) in 1492. Throughout the generations, the main Jewish communities were to be found in Damascus and Aleppo. In 1943, the Jewish community of Syria had 30,000 members. In 1945, in an attempt to thwart efforts to establish a Jewish homeland, the government restricted immigration to [Israel](#), and Jewish property was burned and looted. The government then froze Jewish bank accounts and confiscated their property.

[Syrian Jewry](#) supported the aspirations of the Arab nationalists and Zionism, and believed that the two parties could be reconciled and that the conflict in Palestine could be resolved. Following Syrian independence from [France](#) in 1946, however, attacks against Jews and their property increased, culminating in the pogroms of 1947, which left all shops and synagogues in Aleppo in ruins. Thousands of Jews fled the country, approximately 10,000 to the [United States](#), and another 5,000 to Israel, and their homes and property were taken over by the local Muslims.

For the next decades, those Syrian Jews that remained were, in effect, hostages of a hostile regime. They could leave Syria only on the condition that they leave members of their family behind. Jews were stripped of their citizenship, and experienced employment discrimination. They had their assets frozen and property confiscated. The community lived under siege, constantly under surveillance of the secret police.

The last Jews to leave Syria departed with the chief [rabbi](#) in October 1994. Prior to 1947, there were some 30,000 Jews who made up three distinct communities: the Kurdish-speaking Jews of Kamishli, the Jews of Aleppo with roots in [Spain](#), and the original eastern Jews of Damascus, called Must'arab. Today, only a tiny remnant of these communities remains.

EGYPT

Jews have lived in [Egypt](#) since Biblical times. Israelite tribes first moved to the land of Goshen, the northeastern edge of the Nile Delta, during the reign of the Egyptian [pharaoh](#) Amenhotep IV (1375-1358 BCE). By 1897, there were more than 25,000 Jews in Egypt, concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria. The first Nationality Code was promulgated by Egypt on May 26, 1926. The only people who were entitled to Egyptian nationality were those "who belonged racially to the majority of the population of a country whose language is Arabic or whose religion is Islam." This provision served as the official pretext for expelling many Jews from Egypt.

In 1937, the population reached 63,500. In 1945, with the rise of Egyptian nationalism and the cultivation of anti-Western and anti-Jewish sentiment, riots erupted. In the violence, 10 Jews were killed, 350 injured, and a [synagogue](#), a Jewish hospital, and an old-age home were burned down. On July 29, 1947, an amendment was introduced to the Egyptian Companies Law which made it mandatory for at least 75% of the administrative employees of a company to be Egyptian nationals and 90% of employees in general. This decree resulted in the loss of livelihood for many Jews. The establishment of the State of Israel led to further anti-Jewish sentiments. Between June and November 1948, bombs set off in the Jewish Quarter killed more than 70 Jews and wounded nearly 200. 2,000 Jews were arrested and many had their property confiscated. Rioting over the next few months resulted in many more Jewish deaths.

In 1956, the [Egyptian](#) government used the [Sinai Campaign](#) as a pretext for expelling almost 25,000 Egyptian Jews and confiscating their property. Approximately 1,000 more Jews were sent to prisons and detention camps. On November 23, 1956, a proclamation signed by the Minister of Religious Affairs, and read aloud in mosques throughout Egypt, declared that "all Jews are Zionists and enemies of the state," and promised that they would be soon expelled.

Thousands of Jews were ordered to leave the country. They were allowed to take only one suitcase and a small sum of cash, and forced to sign declarations "donating" their property to the Egyptian government. Foreign observers reported that members of Jewish families were taken

hostage, apparently to insure that those forced to leave did not speak out against the Egyptian government.

By 1957 the Jewish population had fallen to 15,000. In 1967, after the [Six-Day War](#), there was a renewed wave of persecution, and the community dropped to 2,500. By the 1970s, after the remaining Jews were given permission to leave the country, the community dwindled to a few families. Today, nearly all the Jews in Egypt are elderly, and the community is on the verge of extinction.

IRAQ

Jews had prospered in what was then Babylonia for 1200 years before the Muslim conquest in 634 AD. Under Muslim rule, the situation of the Jewish community fluctuated. Some Jews held high positions in the government or prospered in commerce and trade. At the same time, Jews were subjected to special taxes and restrictions on their professional activity. Under British rule, which began in 1917, Jews fared well economically, but this changed when Iraq gained independence.

In June 1941, the Mufti-inspired, pro-[Nazi](#) coup of Rashid Ali sparked rioting and a pogrom in Baghdad. Armed [Iraqi](#) mobs, with the complicity of the police and the army, murdered 180 Jews and wounded almost 1,000. Although emigration was prohibited, many Jews made their way to Israel during this period with the aid of an underground movement. Additional outbreaks of anti-Jewish rioting occurred between 1946-49, and after the establishment of Israel in 1948, Zionism became a capital crime. In 1950, the Iraqi parliament finally legalized emigration to Israel, provided Iraqi Jews forfeited their citizenship. Between May 1950 and August 1951, the Jewish Agency and the Israeli government succeeded in airlifting approximately 110,000 Jews to Israel in [Operations Ezra and Nehemiah](#). At the same time, 20,000 Jews were smuggled out of Iraq through [Iran](#). A year later the property of Jews who emigrated from Iraq was frozen, and economic restrictions were placed on Jews who remained in the country. In 1952, Iraq's government barred Jews from emigrating, and publicly hanged two Jews after falsely charging them with hurling a bomb at the Baghdad office of the U.S. Information Agency. A community that had reached a peak of 150,000 in 1947, dwindled to a mere 6,000 after 1951.

Persecutions continued, especially after the Six Day War in 1967, when the remaining 3,000 Jews were arrested and dismissed from their jobs. Those who were arrested, some were hanged in the public square of Baghdad, others died of torture.

MOROCCO

Jews first appeared in [Morocco](#) more than two millennia ago, traveling there in association with Phoenician traders. The first substantial Jewish settlements developed in 586 BCE when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed [Jerusalem](#). In June 1948, bloody riots in Oujda and Djerada killed 44 Jews and wounded scores more. That same year, an unofficial economic boycott was instigated against [Moroccan](#) Jews. In 1956, Morocco declared its independence, and by 1959 Zionist activities became illegal. In 1963, more than 100,000 Moroccan Jews were forced out from their homes and moved to Israel. During these years, more than 30,000 Jews left for [France](#) and the Americas in search of a better life.

YEMEN

The first historical existence of Jews in [Yemen](#) is from the third century CE. In 1922, the government of [Yemen](#) reintroduced an ancient Islamic law that decreed that Jewish orphans under age 12 were to be converted to Islam. In 1947, after the partition vote, Muslim rioters, joined by the local police force, engaged in a bloody pogrom in Aden that killed 82 Jews and destroyed hundreds of Jewish homes. Aden's Jewish community was economically paralyzed, as most of the Jewish stores and businesses were destroyed. Early in 1948, looting occurred after six Jews were falsely accused of murdering two Arab girls. 50,000 Jews were forced out of Yemen in 1948. By 1959 over 3,000 Jews from Aden arrived in Israel, many more fled to the US and England. Today, there are no Jews in Aden. There are an estimated 1,000 Jews in Yemen today, but they are held as hostages in dire condition, and not allowed to leave.

TUNISIA

The first documented evidence of Jews living in what is Tunisia dates back to 200 CE. After the Ahab conquest of Tunisia in the seventh century, Jews lived under satisfactory conditions, despite discriminatory measures such as a poll tax. In 1948, the Tunisian Jewish community had numbered 105,000, with 65,000 living in Tunis alone. Jews suffered greatly in 1956, when the country achieved independence. The rabbinical tribunal was abolished in 1957, and a year later,

Jewish community councils were dissolved. In addition, the Jewish quarter of Tunis was destroyed by the government. Anti-Jewish rioting followed the outbreak of the Six-Day War, and Muslims burned down the [Great Synagogue of Tunis](#). These events increased the steady stream of emigration to Israel. Today, an estimated 2,000 Jews remain in Tunisia.

LIBYA

The Jewish community of [Libya](#) traces its origin back some 2,500 years to around the third century BCE. At the time of the Italian occupation in 1911, there were approximately 21,000 Jews in the country, the majority in Tripoli. In the late 1930s, fascist anti-Jewish laws were gradually enforced, and Jews were subject to terrible repression. Yet, by 1941, the Jews accounted for a quarter of the population of Tripoli and maintained 44 synagogues. In 1942, the [Germans](#) occupied the Jewish quarter of Benghazi, plundered shops, and deported more than 2,000 Jews across the desert, where more than one-fifth of them perished. Many Jews from Tripoli were also sent to forced labor camps. Conditions did not greatly improve following liberation. During the [British](#) occupation, there were a series of pogroms. A savage pogrom occurred in Tripoli on November 5, 1945, where more than 140 Jews were massacred and almost every synagogue in the city was looted. In June 1948, rioters murdered another 12 Jews and destroyed 280 Jewish homes. When the British legalized emigration in 1949, more than 30,000 Jews fled [Libya](#).

Thousands of Jews fled the country to Israel after Libya was granted independence and membership in the Arab League in 1951. A law on December 31, 1958 ordered for the dissolution of the Jewish Community Council and the appointment of a Moslem commissioner nominated by the government. In 1961, a special permit was needed to show proof of being a true Libyan citizenship; all but six Jews were denied this document. After the [Six-Day War](#), the Jewish population, now only 7,000 was again subjected to pogroms in which 18 people were killed, and many more injured, sparking a near-total exodus that left fewer than 100 Jews in Libya. When Colonel Qaddafi came to power in 1969, all Jewish property was confiscated and all debts to Jews cancelled. Although emigration was illegal, more than 3,000 Jews succeeded in leaving for Israel. By 1974, there were no more than 20 Jews, and it is believed that the Jewish presence has passed out of existence.

ALGERIA

In 1934, a [Nazi](#)-incited pogrom in Constantine left 25 Jews dead and scores injured. On the eve of the civil war that gripped the country in the late 1950s, there were some 130,000 Jews in [Algeria](#), approximately 30,000 of whom lived in the capital. Nearly all Algerian Jews fled the country shortly after it gained independence from [France](#) in 1962. After being granted independence in 1962, the Algerian government harassed the Jewish community and deprived Jews of their principle economic rights, forcing 150,000 Jews to leave Algeria.

LEBANON

Jews had lived in [Lebanon](#) since ancient times; [King Herod](#) the Great in the first century CE supported the Jewish community living in Beirut. During the first half of the twentieth century, the Jewish community expanded tremendously due to immigration from [Greece](#), [Turkey](#), and later from [Syria](#) and [Iraq](#). There were instances of rioting and incitement of violence around the establishment of the State of Israel, but unlike other Middle Eastern countries, Lebanon was under Christian-Arab rule, which provided relative tolerance for Jews. Despite their treatment, many felt insecure, and there was a mass emigration in 1967 to [France](#), [Israel](#), [Italy](#), [England](#) and [South America](#). Since the civil war in Lebanon, there are barely an estimated 150 Jews living in the country today.

Jewish Population in Arab Countries 1948-2001

	1948	1958	1968	1976	2004
Aden	8,000	800	0	0	0
Algeria	140,000	130,000	1,500	1,000	Fewer than 100
Egypt	75,000	40,000	1,000	400	Fewer than 100
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	Approx. 35

Lebanon	5,000	6,000	3,000	400	Fewer than 100
Libya	38,000	3,750	100	40	0
Morocco	265,000	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,500
Syria	30,000	5,000	4,000	4,500	Fewer than 100
Tunisia	105,000	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500
Yemen	55,000	3,500	500	500	200
TOTAL	856,000	475,050	72,600	32,190	Approx. 7,635
	(Roumani 83)	(AJY 58)	(AJY 69; Yemen: AJY 70)	(AJY 78)	(AJY 01; Leb.: AJY 88)

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Sources: [Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

Chart courtesy: [Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries](#)

[Eretz Yisrael.org](#)

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