



WE BELIEVE
IN ISRAEL

FORGOTTEN EXODUS: THE UNTOLD STORY OF JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB LANDS



Harif
Association of Jews from the MENA



**STOP
THE
HATE**



2025



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FOREWORD

For decades, the global discourse on refugees from the Middle East has centred almost exclusively on the Palestinian experience. Yet, a parallel tragedy has remained largely unspoken: the mass displacement of over 850,000 Jews from Arab countries in the mid-20th century. These were ancient communities — some predating Islam by over a millennium — erased in less than a generation.

The Jewish presence in the Middle East and North Africa long predates not only the modern Arab nation-state, but even the rise of Islam itself. Jewish communities thrived in Babylonian Mesopotamia, in the Arabian Peninsula, and across North Africa centuries before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad. These communities were foundational to the cultural and economic life of the region for more than two thousand years.

This booklet, developed by We Believe in Israel in partnership with Harif, Stop the Hate UK and The Shield of David, aims to restore historical balance, promote justice, and urge formal recognition of this neglected chapter of history. By highlighting the experiences of these forgotten refugees, we aim to foster a more comprehensive and equitable understanding of the Middle East conflict.

Catherine Perez-Shakdam - Executive Director We Believe In Israel



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Between 1948 and the 1970s, Jewish communities across the Middle East and North Africa faced systematic persecution. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, Jews in Arab countries were targeted for collective punishment. Mobs attacked Jewish quarters, synagogues were burned, and anti-Jewish legislation was enacted. In Iraq, the infamous 1941 Farhud pogrom foreshadowed what was to come: hundreds of Jews were murdered, and Jewish property was looted.

The Arab League actively coordinated measures that led to the revocation of citizenship, forced expulsions, and mass confiscations of property. In Egypt, Jews were labelled enemies of the state, imprisoned, and stripped of their assets. In Libya, pogroms erupted in 1945 and 1948, driving out nearly all of the country's Jews. In Yemen, Operation Magic Carpet airlifted tens of thousands to Israel to save them from worsening conditions. What united these diverse cases was a pattern of state and societal violence designed to eliminate Jewish presence from the Arab world.



LEGAL STATUS OF JEWISH REFUGEES



The absence of international recognition for Jewish refugees from Arab countries contrasts sharply with the sustained political and institutional support given to Palestinian refugees. While the plight of Palestinians has been the subject of hundreds of UN resolutions, not a single resolution has acknowledged the expulsion of Jews from Arab lands.

This disparity not only distorts historical understanding but also entrenches a biased narrative within international diplomacy and the public consciousness. The focus on one group to the exclusion of the other presents a one-sided view of the Arab-Israeli conflict, undermining efforts at mutual recognition and reconciliation. A just and durable peace requires that all experiences of forced displacement be acknowledged and addressed.



CULTURAL ERASURE AND LOSS

The Jewish communities of the Arab world were ancient and deeply embedded in their respective societies. In Baghdad, Jews once comprised a third of the population and were leaders in commerce, literature, and medicine. In Cairo, Jews contributed to education, finance, and architecture. These communities did not simply leave; they were eradicated. The cultural loss is immense. Thousands of synagogues, cemeteries, libraries, and schools were abandoned, destroyed, or repurposed. Sacred texts and artefacts were looted or lost to history. The displacement was not only a humanitarian crisis but a deliberate erasure of centuries of coexistence and contribution.

Economically, the loss was staggering. It is estimated that Jewish refugees from Arab lands left behind assets worth billions of pounds, including land holdings equivalent to the combined area of Lebanon and Jordan. None of these assets have been compensated or returned.



GLOBAL RECOGNITION EFFORTS

Despite institutional silence, several governments and parliaments have taken steps to acknowledge the injustice suffered by Jewish refugees from Arab countries:

- United States: In 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives passed Resolution 185, affirming that any reference to Palestinian refugees in international resolutions must be matched by reference to Jewish refugees.
- Canada: In 2014, the Canadian government formally recognised the forced displacement of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa and committed to include this narrative in its human rights discourse.
- United Kingdom: On 19 June 2019, the UK Parliament held a debate on Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran. Cross-party MPs called for official recognition and urged the government to support justice and redress.

These acknowledgments, though significant, must now translate into concrete policies and public awareness.



WHAT WE ARE CALLING FOR

We urge the UK Government to take meaningful steps to address this historical injustice:

- **Formal Recognition:** Acknowledge the expulsion and dispossession of Jewish communities from Arab countries as a refugee crisis.
- **Inclusion in Policy and Education:** Incorporate the history of Jewish refugees into UK foreign policy discourse and national curricula, ensuring future generations understand the full context of the Middle East conflict.
- **Restitution and Compensation:** Support efforts to catalogue lost Jewish property, encourage restitution where possible, and consider symbolic or financial compensation.
- **Balanced Peace Frameworks:** Insist that any future diplomatic resolutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict include provisions for all refugee populations affected, including Jews from Arab lands.



IN THE WORDS OF HISTORY

“No human being is illegal. Every human being has the right to live with dignity, to live in peace, to have access to education and opportunity.”

— Elie Wiesel - Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Share the Booklet

Distribute this document widely—within your community, to educators, journalists, faith leaders, and local influencers. Use it to start conversations rooted in facts, not slogans.

Speak Up

Challenge distortion wherever you see it—on social media, in meetings, and in everyday discussion. Replace emotional rhetoric with grounded arguments. Speak not just loudly, but wisely.

Join Our Campaign

Follow us online, sign up for campaign updates, and connect with the work of Stop The Hate UK , The Shield of David and partner organisations. Unity is our strength; momentum comes through collective resolve.

Hold the Line

The defence of truth, dignity, and democratic values begins at home. When we push back against appeasement and resist moral relativism, we reinforce the very principles that hold society together.



JUSTICE FOR JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB LANDS



**850,000 VOICES SILENCED.
IT'S TIME TO SPEAK UP**

**JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN WITH HARIF—
WRITE TO YOUR MP TODAY**

#ForgottenExodus

WE BELIEVE IN ISRAEL

At We Believe in Israel (WBI), our mission is to champion a fair, nuanced, and balanced understanding of the State of Israel. Our endeavours transcend mere political discourse, striving to encapsulate and represent the true essence of Israel in all its vibrant complexity. We are dedicated to fostering open and informed conversations that illuminate Israel's multifaceted nature, addressing and challenging the deep-seated biases against the Jewish State.



STOP THE HATE UK

At Stop The Hate UK, our mission is to stand boldly against antisemitism and anti-Israel hate wherever it appears. We are a grassroots movement dedicated to protecting the safety, dignity, and visibility of Jewish people in the UK, and to advocating proudly for Israel. Beyond responding to hate, we empower our community through direct action, challenge institutional failures, and defend the right to be visibly and unapologetically Jewish and Zionist. We confront anti-Jewish hatred not as a relic of the past, but as a threat in the present—and we are here to stop it.

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HARIF

Harif is a UK charity representing Jews from North Africa and the Middle East (UK no.1186454), and dedicated to promoting their history, culture and heritage. Few know that ancient Jewish communities, predating Islam by a millennium, produced the Babylonian Talmud, great rabbis, doctors, thinkers and poets. In modern times, Jews made important economic and cultural contributions to their home countries. Few in the West are aware that Jews were an integral part of the Middle East and North Africa before they were driven out of their homes in the second half of the 20th century.



THE SHIELD OF DAVID

We are a UK advocacy group with members of all faiths, who recognise the danger of rising Antisemitism. Our aim is to make advocacy EASY and we provide regular emails templates that can be swiftly signed and sent. We also aim to share and amplify the superb work being done by other Israel and Jewish campaign groups here in the UK



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