

JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES

“The Forgotten Refugees Educational Unit”

CURRICULUM INITIATIVE FOR JEWISH SCHOOLS

Produced by:

Justice for Jews from Arab Countries and

The David Project Center for Jewish Leadership

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- To Shelomo Alfassa and Nathalie Alyon, who have also been instrumental in creating this *Educational Unit*.

It is our hope that this *Forgotten Refugees Educational Unit* will continue to evolve and improve with the help of Jewish educators. If you have any suggestions for additional material or comments about the current *Educational Unit*, please let us know.

THIS *FORGOTTEN REFUGEES EDUCATIONAL UNIT*

IS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

www.justiceforjews.com/educationalunit.html

Introduction

Dear Educator,

We would like to thank you for your interest in this important educational initiative about Jews from Arab countries.

When the word ‘refugees’ is mentioned in the context of the Middle East, people invariably refer to Palestinian refugees. The story of over 850,000 Jews, uprooted since 1948 from thousands of Jewish communities that had existed in the region for 2,500 years, has often been ignored.

Little is heard about these Jewish refugees from Arab countries because they did not remain refugees long. Some two-thirds went to Israel while the rest found safe haven in Europe, North America and elsewhere.

This *Educational Unit* is designed to assist you and your students in learning, and engaging in informed discussion, about this historical displacement of Jews from Arab countries. Its objectives:

- 1) To educate students about the history, heritage and subsequent plight and flight of Jews from Arab countries; and
- 2) To inform students about, and facilitate their engagement in larger, contemporary Jewish issues – in this case, Middle East refugees.

We recognize that many teachers face time constraints with their existing curricular requirements. Therefore, as a guide for educators, this *Educational Unit* provides an invaluable collection of guided lesson plans; a 15 minute DVD film entitled “*The Forgotten Refugees*”, produced by the David Project and directed by Michel Grynzspan; optional lessons, resource materials, and suggestions for further inquiry. There are suggestions and options provided on how to use these materials in Jewish educational school settings.

The *Unit* also provides suggestions for expanding the educational opportunities to a wider audience:

- The movie could be screened at a special assembly, with perhaps a “living witness” from an Arab country invited to share his/her story;
- The “*Registration and Research Activity*” would allow interested students to be trained as volunteers to conduct and tape interviews with Jews who fled an Arab country;
- There is also a list of suggestions on how educational materials could be utilized in co-curricular activities at different times of the year (See attached Appendix A: p. 8).

We thank you for both participating in this educational initiative and for all your efforts on behalf of educating young Jews throughout the year.

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THE FORGOTTEN REFUGEES CURRICULUM

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Teachers' Guide

The purpose of this Teachers' Guide is to provide guidance and resources that will allow you to introduce your students to the history and legacy "*The Forgotten Refugees*."

This *Educational Unit* on Jewish refugees from Arab countries is a 'pilot edition', prepared expressly for the November 2007 program in the tri-state Jewish school system.

Feel free to follow, or experiment with the lesson plans. These materials could be integrated into a variety of curricular areas or as enrichment activities. The sponsors welcome your comments and feedback forms are included at the end of this section.

GOALS

The goals of this *Educational Unit* are to educate and engage students by:

1. Introducing the narrative of the Jews from Arab countries, and restoring it to its rightful place within Jewish literacy; and
2. Presenting a fact based, historical context for the 2,500 saga of Jews in Arab countries, to better understand the current Arab-Israeli situation; and
3. Encouraging students to collect information on the personal lives and stories of Sephardi-Mizrahi Jews who were displaced from their ancestral homes.

TARGET POPULATION

These lessons were drafted for use with middle school and high school aged students in both formal and informal educational settings.

PEDAGOGIC STRATEGY

Jewish tradition and education has always recognized the impact of imagining one's self as having taken part in a specific, pivotal experience, or putting yourself in another's place. The entire Pesach Seder is based on the injunction "that all participants are obligated to view themselves as if they had left Egypt." By focusing on the personal stories of Jews who left Arab countries, this 'personal' insight helps us move from knowledge to empathy. Additionally, fact based historical lessons contribute to better understanding the complexities of current Arab-Israeli relations.

SESSION STRUCTURE

The suggested approach is to introduce this unit in two-sessions, during 50 minute classes.

During Session I, a film entitled “*The Forgotten Refugees*”, produced by the David Project and directed by Michael Grynzspan could be screened. Thereafter, teachers would debrief students on what they saw and then introduce and discuss the “*Registration and Research Activity*” which is pivotal to the overall program.

Where possible, students may interview Sephardi-Mizrahi Jews and document their stories. Other students can research and report on life as it was for Jews in one of 10 Arab countries.

The focus of Session II is on debriefing students about their interviews and/or country research.

PREPARATION

- Please preview both “*The Forgotten Refugees*” and the lesson plans provided for Sessions I and II;
- Familiarize yourself with any additional information you may need from the enclosed section on “Educational Materials for Sessions I & II; and the Section entitled: “Resource and Reference Materials”
- Review the goals and mechanics of the “*Registration and Research*” activity;
- Decide on the most useful approach for your class; and
- Develop for distribution your own advance organizer or use the one provided in Appendix E: (See p. 12)

SESSION I: LESSON PLAN

Topic:	Jews from Arab Countries
Subject Areas:	History, Israel Studies, Bible, Geography, Current Events
Type of Lesson	Introductory

GOALS

1. Students will explore historical facts about *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jewry who were indigenous to North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region;
2. Students will examine life for Jews living in and contributing to, their countries under Muslim rule; and
3. Students will gain understanding of and empathy towards the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will gain knowledge about Jews in countries that fell under Arab/ Moslem rule, including:
 - a. Length of history of Sephardi-Mizrahi Jewry, dating back to Biblical times;
 - b. Names of Arab countries where Jews resided;
 - c. Concept of *Dhimmi*;
 - d. Discrimination against Jewish populations in Arab countries;
 - e. Define “refugee;” and
 - f. Understand Jews displaced from Arab countries as “Middle East refugees.”
2. Students will be able to demonstrate the linkage between the establishment of the State of Israel and life for Jews in Arab countries.

MATERIALS

1. DVD: “The Forgotten Refugees” (15 minutes)
2. Glossary of Terms (See attached Appendix B: p. 9)
3. Advanced Organizer (See attached Appendix E: p. 12))
4. Population Chart (See attached Appendix F: p. 14)
5. Map of Jewish Refugees Flight to Israel (See attached Appendix G: p. 15)

TIME REQUIRED

On the assumption that the class is 50 minutes, sessions should be constructed to provide adequate time for introducing the subject and the film, viewing, discussion, and related work.

LESSON PLAN

ACTIVITY # 1: *The Forgotten Refugees* film presentation and discussion

1. Introduce the subject before viewing the film by creating a sense of personal relevance. Two options are provided as examples: (1) Draft introductory remarks (See attached Appendix C: p. 10); or (2) Trigger questions (See attached Appendix D: p. 11).
2. Distribution of the advanced session organizer (If appropriate and useful – See attached Appendix E: p. 12) Ask questions to see whether students are clear on how to use it.
3. Showing the film “*The Forgotten Refugees*.”
4. Discussing and analyzing reactions:
 - a. What did they learn?
 - b. How do they feel about it?
 - c. What do they think they can do about it?

ACTIVITY # 2: Follow-Up: “*Registration and Research Activity*”

Your students can join with thousands of other students around the world who are being asked to interview Jews originally from an Arab country. The information your students collect will be sent to Israel and preserved to forever confirm the history of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were forced to flee their homes in Arab countries.

Why is this important? As you learned from the film “*The Forgotten Refugees*” the word ‘refugees’ in the context of the Middle East must include the over 850,000 Jews from Arab countries.

It is only fair that the Jewish refugees’ testimonies be told. We should know what these Jews lived through to survive and protect Sephardi-Mizrahi heritage. And this is what this follow up activity is all about. For us to be educated about their story.

How can you help accomplish this goal? This can be done in two ways:

1. For those able to, students will interview a Sephardi-Mizrahi Jew who fled from an Arab country; or
2. Students who do not have that opportunity can research a ‘country profile’ - the life of Jews in one particular country. In sharing this report with the class, all students will better understand the plight and flight of Jews from up to 10 Arab countries.

[At this point, you can hand out the materials for both groups of students that are contained in the section entitled:”*Registration and Research Activity*”]

SESSION II: LESSON PLAN

Topic:	Jews from Arab Countries: Follow Up
Subject Areas:	Israel Studies, Geography, History, Reading, Math, Arts
Type of Lesson	Reinforce and reflect on lessons learned

This second session could take place perhaps as much as a week later, after the showing of the film. This should provide enough time to conduct the interview, or to engage in research, and to reflect on the results.

GOALS

- 1) Students will explore new facts and reinforce the learning that took place as a result of the movie, the subsequent interviews and the research on ‘country profiles;’ and
- 2) Students will examine the linkage between the plight and flight of Jews from Arab countries and the State of Israel.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to provide reflections on Session I and discuss their reactions to conducting the interviews or researching the country profiles”;
2. Students will engage in contextualized discussion on life for Jews in Arab countries and their plight in the context of the Middle-East; and
3. Students will hand in the completed registration forms and teachers will underscore the importance of the students’ efforts and their connection to the ongoing worldwide efforts; and ensure that all forms are turned in to the proper school authority.

MATERIALS

1. Student De-Briefing Outline for Interviewers and ‘Country Profiles’ (See attached Appendix H: p. 16)
2. “Myths and Facts: Discussion Guide (See attached Appendix I: p. 17)

TIME REQUIRED

This lesson plan has been developed for a 50 minute class.

LESSON DEVELOPEMNT

At the outset, please collect all completed registration forms and describe what the next steps in the process are. The collected forms will go to the US campaign office that will deposit one copy in the Center for Jewish History in New York. The originals will be sent to the worldwide Registration Bank of Testimonies that is being managed by the Ministry of Justice in Israel.

Teacher please note: Return the collected forms to the school Administrator’s office, which will forward the documentation directly to the Campaign’s Headquarters in a special UPS envelope provided to the School for that purpose.

After this is done, this session can vary depending on whether or not students were able to interview a Sephardi-Mizrahi.

However, in either case – where students either interviewed *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jews or conducted “country profile” research, it would be useful for the lesson to begin with a “debriefing” of students – their reactions, feelings to their interviews and/or research. The A student *De-Briefing Outline for Interviewers and County Profiles* has been prepared that provides trigger questions to stimulate discussion in both these scenarios (See attached Appendix H: p. 16)

To begin the class, please:

- Have the students who interviewed a *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jew report on the interview and what they heard. The teacher could then lead a discussion with the entire class.
- The groups of students who conducted “country profiles” would report on their research and the class could then engage in a discussion on these differing experiences.

This activity – particularly for high school students, could potentially take the entire class. Alternatively, particularly for middle school-age students, this de-briefing activity could be limited to 25 minutes, following which the class could discuss in depth, the issues raised in the “Myths and Facts” activity. (See attached Appendix I: p. 17)

The enclosed “Myths and Facts” Discussion Guide provides the teacher with answers to the questionnaire and could also be used as a handout for high school students.

LESSON CLOSURE

1. It may be helpful to begin by telling the students how impressed and proud you are of their efforts in participating in this international Jewish communal project.
2. If class or individuals are moved by this issue and are interested and want more information, you could provide them with some of the enclosed reference sources including: bibliography, web sites, contact information, and subscriptions sites for appropriate newsletters.
3. You could finish by telling the students if they want to actively support this cause, they can engage in the constructive activities that are detailed in the “Follow-Up Activities Sheet” (See attached Appendix J: p. 22)

We would welcome your feedback on this *Educational Unit*. Please complete the attached Evaluation Form and send it back to us. (See attached Appendix K: p. 23)

Many thanks for your participation.

APPENDIX A:

HOW TO USE THIS EDUCATIONAL UNIT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

It is important to underscore that this issue could be both meaningful **and** educationally useful at many points during the school year - around Jewish holidays (e.g. Passover); or celebrations (e.g. *Yom Ha-atzmaut*).

Although most useful in the context of historical studies, sections of this educational unit and information on the *Justice for Jews from Arab Countries* website (www.justiceforjews.com) and on *The David Project* website (www.theforgottenrefugees.com) can be used constructively in ways beyond just teaching about the life and customs of Jews from Arab countries. It can be infused into and enhance many subjects, including history, geography, Bible, art, and math. It can be used to help teach many life skills, such as writing, reading, and listening.

The lesson plans can be modified easily for use with different age levels and in a variety of educational venues. The overall subject of “The Forgotten Refugees” can be incorporated into many curricular topics throughout the year such as:

- Jewish History –
 - Historical Contexts of Mizrahi History
 - Historic Scholarship
 - Contributions of Sephardi-Mizrahi Communities
 - World and Jewish Attitudes toward Mid-Easterners in general and Mizrahi Jews in particular
- Jewish Life Cycles and Culture: Unique Customs and Traditions related to:
 - Chaggim/ Holidays
 - *Gemillut chesed*.
 - Sephardi-Mizrahi Culture
 - Music
 - Foods
- Israel
 - The Role of Mizrahi Jews in the Fabric of Israel Society
- General Studies:
 - Current Events: Reading news articles
 - Social Action
 - Math
 - Geography studies.

We hope you enjoy this *Sephardi-Mizrahi* experience with your students.

APPENDIX B:

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DHIMMI: (Arabic) Among its many meanings, the word *dhimmi* literally means “protection, care or custody.” *Dhimmis* were designated in the *Koran* as protected non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state. This status included *People of the Book* (i.e. Jews and Christians). *Dhimmi* had fewer legal and social rights than Muslims. In exchange for paying a mandatory tax known as the *jizya*, *dhimmis* could enjoy relative protection. Rules affecting Jewish *dhimmis* included: restrictions on where they lived; the requirement that they wear (or don’t wear) certain types and colors of clothing; and restrictions and regulation on the building of synagogues. Furthermore, Jews could not ride horses or camels (because their head would be higher than a Muslims’); they were not allowed to testify against a Muslim in court; and they were expected to demonstrate public subservience to Muslims.

SEPHARDI/ MIZRAHI: *Sephardi* Jews are those Jews that originally came from Spain and Portugal in the 15th century after being expelled during the Inquisition. These Jews emigrated to many places, primarily North Africa, Southeastern Europe, Asia and the Middle East often settling into Jewish communities already in existence. By comparison, *Mizrahi* (Hebrew for *Eastern*) Jews are those who have very old roots in the Middle East and Gulf region, in countries such as Iraq and Iran. Many Mizrahi Jews have families that have lived in the Middle East for thousands of years. Together, Sephardi and *Mizrahi* Jews have developed and shared common religious and cultural bonds for at least the last 1,500 years. Because they possess a shared relationship based upon unique religious traditions, collective ideals, customs and ethnicity, the term *Sephardi* and *Mizrahi* are often used interchangeably today.

REFUGEE: Refugees are persons who flee their country of residence in search of refuge, as in times of war, political oppression, or religious persecution. Officially, the United Nations considers a refugee as a person who has a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country.”

UNHCR: The UNHCR is an abbreviation for the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. The main role of The UNHCR is to protect and assist refugees in finding durable solutions to their displacement.

APPENDIX C:

BEFORE SCREENING THE FILM – INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

(Feel free to put in your own words)

In 1945 there were approximately 850,000 Jews living in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Today, there are less than 7,000 in these 10 Arab countries. What happened to these Jews? Where did they go? And why don't we know their story?

The film we are about to watch attempts to answer some of these questions. Through the testimony of individuals who were forced to flee their homes, as well as archival footage, *The Forgotten Refugees* begins to explore the history of these Jews. It is an important film produced by *The David Project* of the US and directed by Michael Grynzspan of Israel.

Jews and Jewish communities have existed in the region for 2,500 years -- fully 1,000 years before the advent of Islam. There were times when Jewish life in North Africa and the Middle East flourished even though under Islamic rule, Jews were considered second-class citizens (*dhimmis*).

Any flourishing of Jewish life came to an end in the 20th century. Many Arab regimes denied human rights to Jews; expropriated their property; and stripped them of their citizenship. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions. Upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, as the situation worsened, Jews began to flee Arab countries to find safety in Israel and elsewhere.

Yet, when we speak about the Middle East, and when we mention the word 'refugees', everyone immediately thinks about Palestinian refugees.

Jews displaced from Arab countries were also refugees, victims of the Arab - Israeli conflict. They lost their homes, their businesses, their bank accounts. Entire Jewish communities ceased to exist and their assets-including synagogues, Jewish schools, community centers, hospitals and cemeteries were seized. No compensation has ever been received for these losses.

The result – Over 52% of Israel's population is composed of Jews who were forced to flee their homes in Arab countries.

(This would be a good time to hand out population chart found below in Appendix F)

These statistics tell the story. Every war between Israel and Arab countries (point out 1948; 1956; 1967; etc.) resulted in Jews being uprooted from the countries in which they and their families had lived for centuries.

After we screen the movie, we will discuss what can be done to ensure that Jews displaced from Arab countries will not remain "The Forgotten Refugees."

APPENDIX D:

BEFORE SCREENING THE FILM – TRIGGER QUESTIONS

1. *“Do you know what an immigrant is?”*

► ***SOMEBODY WHO HAS COME TO A COUNTRY AND SETTLED THERE.***

2. *“I am sure that all of our families, at one time or another, were immigrants. Is there anyone in this group who does NOT have an ancestor who was an immigrant?”*

► ***[“MY FAMILY CAME FROM....”] WHERE DID YOUR ANCESTORS COME FROM? WHO WERE THEY -- GRANDPARENTS OR GREAT GRANDPARENTS? WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?” AFTER THEY LIST, YOU COULD ANALYZE WHERE THEY CAME FROM. IF ALL FROM EUROPE, NOTE THAT. IF THERE WERE ANY FROM MIZRAHI COUNTRIES NOTE THAT ALSO.***

3. *“Were any of these people refugees?”*

► ***IF SOMEONE SAYS YES, ASK WHY THEY LEFT THEIR PLACE OF ORIGIN.***

4. *“Do you know what a refugee is?”*

► ***SOMEBODY WHO LOOKING FOR A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE -- SEEKING OR TAKING REFUGE, ESPECIALLY FROM WAR OR PERSECUTION, BY GOING TO A DIFFERENT COUNTRY.***

5. *“What is the difference between an immigrant and a refugee?”*

► ***ALL REFUGEES ARE IMMIGRANTS, BUT NOT ALL IMMIGRANTS ARE REFUGEES. MANY IMMIGRANTS MAKE A VOLUNTARY DECISION TO MOVE TO BETTER THEMSELVES. REFUGEES DO NOT HAVE THAT LEVEL OF CHOICE.***

6. *“What have you heard about Jewish life in Arab countries?”*

► ***HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU WERE IN THE SAME SITUATION? WHAT WOULD YOU DO AND WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT FROM OTHER JEWS? AND FROM THE WORLD?***

APPENDIX E:

ADVANCED SESSION ORGANIZER

(Feel free to revise as you see fit)

(Could be handed out to students before the movie begins. How much can they fill out before the movie? Have the students correct and complete during the movie.)

1. Name some of the countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region that had Jewish communities before WWII.

a)	b)	c)
d)	e)	f)
g)	h)	i)

2. How many years old is the ancient Jewish community of Iraq?_____

3. What does the word *Mizrahim*” mean?

4. Did Jews have relationships with their Arab neighbors?

5. What does the word “*dhimmi*” mean?

6. Was there any relationship between Arab countries and leaders with Nazi Germany?

7. Why did Jews leave their homes in Arab countries?

8. How was life for Jews from Arab countries after their arrival in Israel?

9. Have there ever been UN resolutions on:

Palestinian Refugees_____

Jewish Refugees? _____

10. Which issues or facts did you find the most surprising? New? Unexpected?

11. What scene or words in the film affected you the most?

12. Why do you think the film is called "*The Forgotten Refugees?*"

13. Do you have any other questions or comments about the film?

APPENDIX F:

The Displacement of Jews From Arab Countries: 1948-2005

	1948 ¹	1958 ²	1968 ³	1976 ⁴	2001 ⁵	2005 ⁶
Aden	8,000	800	0	0	0	0
Algeria	140,000	130,000	3,000	1,000	0	0
Egypt	75,000	40,000	2,500	400	100	100
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	100	60 ⁷
Lebanon	5,000	6,000	3,000	400	100	~50 ⁸
Libya	38,000	3,750	500	40	0	0
Morocco	265,000	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,700	3,500
Syria	30,000	5,000	4,000	4,500	100	100
Tunisia	105,000	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500	1,100
Yemen	55,000	3,500	500	500	200 ⁹	200
TOTAL	856,000	475,050	76,000	32,190	7,800	5,110

Chart researched and compiled by *Justice for Jews from Arab Countries*

¹ Data was derived from multiple sources, including: *Trends and Characteristics of International Migration since 1950 – Refugee Movements and Population Transfers*” United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs: Demographic Study No. 64 ST/ESA/Ser. A/64, 1978; Roumani, Maurice. *The Jews from Arab Countries: A Neglected Issue*. WOJAC, 1983. p.2; --- *The Jewish Case Before The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry*, 1946; Cohen, Hayyim J. *Zionist Activity in the States of the Middle East*. Jerusalem: WZO, 1973.; Sitton, David. *The Sephardic Communities in Our Times*. Jerusalem: Sephardic Council Press, 1974; Chouraqui, Andre. *Marche vers l’Occident-Les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952; Schechtman, Joseph B. *On Wings of Eagles: The Plight, Exodus and Homecoming of Oriental Jewry*. New York, Yoseloff, 1961; Littman, David. “Jews Under Muslim Rule in the Late Nineteenth Century.” London: *The Wiener Bulletin*. Vol. XXVIII, New Series Nos. 35/36, 1975.

² *American Jewish Yearbook (AJY) v.58 American Jewish Committee.*

³ AJY v.68; AJY v.71

⁴ AJY v.78

⁵ AJY v.101

⁶ AJY v.105

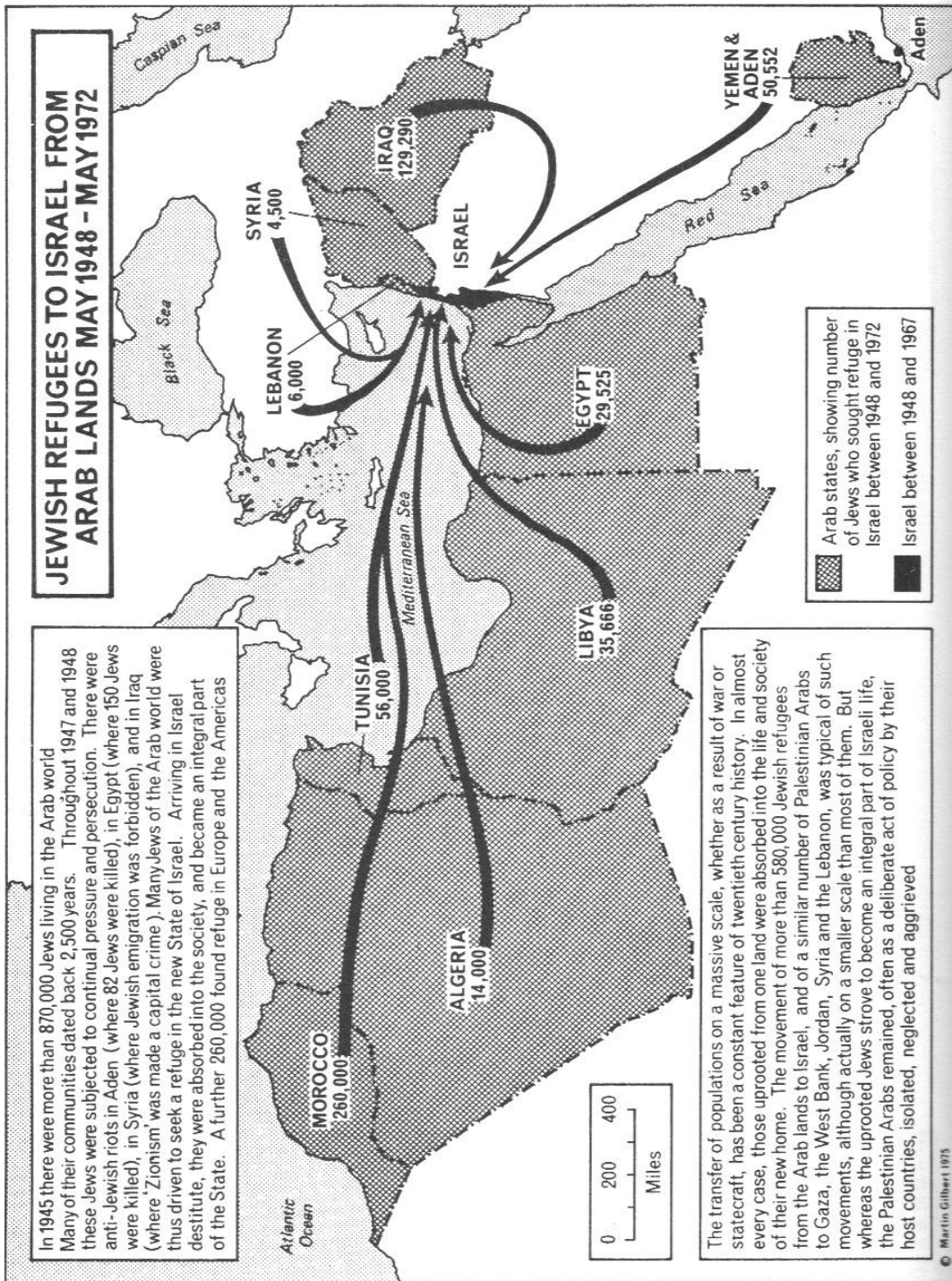
⁷ Saad Jawad Qindeel, head of the political bureau of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, as reported in *The Jerusalem Post*; July 18, 2005.

⁸ *Time Magazine*. February 27, 2007.

⁹ AJY v.102

APPENDIX G:

MAP OF JEWISH ALIYAH TO ISRAEL FROM ARAB COUNTRIES



APPENDIX H:

DE-BRIEFING OUTLINE FOR INTERVIEWERS AND ‘COUNTRY PROFILES

For Interviewers: To help students process the information they received during an interview, they could be asked about:

➤ ***Feelings*** – theirs and the interviewee

- What did they say about their attitudes towards their country before they were forced to leave?
- How did they feel about their fellow citizens while they lived there and how do they feel now?
- How did fleeing their place of birth affect their lives?
- What sort of impact do you think this had on their children?
- What would you have done in their place?

➤ ***Facts:***

- Did what the interviewees say compliment and supplement what you saw in the film and read elsewhere -- or do they contradict them?
- What and how do they add to your understanding of the narrative?
- Was there a trigger event that marks their story?

For ‘Country Profiles’: To help students process the information they obtained in conducting research on life for Jews in a particular Arab country:

1. *Compare and contrast* the experiences of Jewish life in the various countries;
 - a. What was similar and what differed between or among them? [List specific examples.]
 - b. To what do you attribute any differences? (Country of origin? Political climate; rulers; other?)
2. *Reflect on some of the following points::*
 - a. What was life like in their countries?
 - b. When did life begin to change in their native Arab countries;
 - c. What events triggered the change?
 - d. What events are examples of the changes?
3. Was there any connection between their experiences and the establishment of the State of Israel?

APPENDIX I:

“MYTHS AND FACTS”: DISCUSSION GUIDE

1) Jews are really among the indigenous people of the Mid-East.

- Jews and Jewish communities have existed in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region in substantial numbers for more than 2,500 years - fully one thousand years before the advent of Islam.
- There has been an uninterrupted presence of large Jewish communities in the Middle East from time immemorial. 8th and 6th century BCE marks the beginnings of the ancient Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa.
- In addition to Biblical sources they are referred to in among other sources such as Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Babylonian records.
- The Koran itself refers to Jewish tribes in the area with whom there were wars and treaties made.
- Through a process of Arabization and Islamicization, these regions are now known as the "Arab world." The original indigenous inhabitants, Jews and others remained as minorities in their ancestral lands.

2) There were significant numbers of Jews resident in numerous Arab countries.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews resided in Arab countries for many centuries, in some cases, more than 1,000 years before the advent of Islam.

<i>COUNTRY (OR MODERN DAY EQUIVALENT)</i>	<i>EARLIEST JEWISH PRESENCE</i>	<i>POPULATION 1948</i>	<i>POPULATION 2001</i>
<i>Morocco</i>	<i>1st century CE</i>	<i>285,000</i>	<i>2,700</i>
<i>Tunisia</i>	<i>2nd century CE</i>	<i>111,000</i>	<i>1,500</i>
<i>Algeria</i>	<i>1-2nd century CE</i>	<i>140,000</i>	<i>Less than 100</i>
<i>Egypt</i>	<i>4th century BCE</i>	<i>75,000</i>	<i>Less than 100</i>
<i>Syria</i>	<i>1st century BCE</i>	<i>30,000</i>	<i>Less than 100</i>
<i>Lebanon</i>	<i>1st century BCE</i>	<i>10,000</i>	<i>Less than 100</i>
<i>Libya</i>	<i>3rd century BCE</i>	<i>40,000</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Iraq</i>	<i>6th century BCE</i>	<i>150,000</i>	<i>Less than 25</i>
<i>Yemen</i>	<i>3rd century BCE</i>	<i>50,000</i>	<i>800</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>891,000</i>	<i>Less than 5000</i>

3) ***For periods of time, Jewish cultural and religious life flourished in many Arab countries.***

The history of Jewish communities in Arab countries was a story of Jewish life flourishing through good times and bad. Not unlike today, Jews conducted their lives based around their community and its support structure. Not only did Jews in Arab countries have magnificent synagogues, modern schools, and Jewish hospitals, they had other communal institutions such as social clubs and social service organizations that provided assistance to the needy. Jews developed their traditional food, music and dance, unique to their specific countries. While some Jews were engineers, physicians and attorneys, others were businessmen, retailers and government employees with pensions. They owned buildings, fleets of vehicles, apartment complexes, real estate, wholesale stores and other property. These Jews treasured family occasions, celebrating holidays together, going to the park, to the movies, and everything else that we associate with modern life.

4) ***Were Jews protected as “dhimmis?”***

- Under Islamic law Jews were considered protected, but second class citizens (*dhimmis*). They were given limited religious, professional and business opportunities.
- In some cases, their condition improved temporarily with the advent of Western influence on the Arab countries.
- Their treatment differed according to the attitude, ideologies, and needs of the then current caliph, king, or sultan.
- Non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities, the original indigenous inhabitants, remained as subjugated minorities in their own lands.

5) ***Separdi-Mizrahi contributions to the patrimony of the Jewish people.***

Jews from what are today Arab countries contributed significantly to Jewish scholarship and tradition.

- The *Talmud Bavli*, the massive record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs and history, was developed in what is today Iraq. Known also as the *Oral Law*, it comprises both the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, and remains the most authoritative basis for all codes in the Jewish religion.
- The *Gaonim*, the leaders of the Jewish people after the Talmud was completed, had their academies in Iraq. There, from the cities of Pumbeditha and Sura, came the legal authorities for Jews all over the world.
- The *Seder Rav Amram*, the first *siddur* (prayer book) came from Iraq, and was disseminated across Europe, eventually becoming the basis for all other prayer books that followed, even the ones Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews use today.
- Rabbi Yishak Alfassi from Morocco wrote the first codification of Jewish law ever, the *Sefer HaHalakot*, which is still used extensively today by both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews.
- The *Rambam* wrote his massive 14 volume *Mishna Torah* of Egypt. To this day it is the only post-Talmudic work that delineates the details of Jewish observance.

- Complete and thorough commentaries on the Bible were written by Jews from Arab lands including Saadiah Gaon in Egypt and Abraham ibn Ezra in *Al-Andalus*, Islamic Spain. These commentaries are still followed today, over 1,000 years after they were written.

6) *Why Jews left their homes in Arab countries.*

- The situation for Jews in Arab countries took a dramatic turn for the worse when virtually all Arab states backed or took part in war against Israel in 1948. This triggered a surge in mob violence and a pattern of discrimination and state-sanctioned repression. Many Jews lost their jobs, their property and their citizenship.
- This made the situation for Jews in Arab countries untenable, and caused a mass exodus from many countries. Those who did not flee became hostages to the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Some of the reasons why people left include:
 - Discrimination/ Anti-Jewish legislation (e.g. Tunisia)
 - Fear of violence/ rioting (e.g. Yemen, Egypt)
 - History of Fascist/Nazi persecution (e.g. Libya, Tunisia)
 - Rising tension of the Arab/Israeli conflict (e.g. Egypt; Syria)

7) *Were Jews displaced from Arab countries Middle East refugees?*

- **The international definition of a refugee clearly applies to Jews who fled the persecution of Arab regimes:**

A refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."

--The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

- **On two occasions, 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 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."

--Mr. Auguste Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Report of the UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session – Geneva 29 January to 4 February, 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." --Dr. E. Jahn, Office of the UN High Commissioner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Document No. 7/2/3/Libya, July 6, 1967

- By all definitions they were refugees, but they were successfully integrated into their host countries. Israel struggled to resettle some 687,000 at great cost. Some 300,000 others built new lives in France, Britain, Italy, Australia, Latin America, Canada and the US.

8) The response of the international community to the two populations of refugees that emerged out of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

(NOTE: In 2002, *Justice for Jews from Arab Countries* published a Legal Report entitled: “*Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries: The Case for Rights and Redress.*” This report documents the lack of any international response to the plight of Jews fleeing from Arab countries and strong political and legal arguments for the legitimate rights of Jews displaced from Arab countries. A copy of this Legal Report can be found at: www.justiceforjews.com)

- Since 1947, the United Nations General Assembly’s predominant focus has been solely on Palestinian refugees:
 - a) 681 resolutions on the Middle East conflict, including 101 resolutions on Palestinian refugees;
 - b) Numerous UN agencies and organizations mandated or newly created to provide protection and relief to Palestinian refugees; and
 - c) Over the last 58 years, tens of billions of dollars have been disbursed by the international community to provide services and assistance to Palestinian refugees.
- During that same period, there were no UN resolutions; no support provided by UN agencies; nor any financial assistance forthcoming from the international community to ameliorate the plight of Jewish and other refugees from Arab countries.

9) The integration of Jews from Arab countries into Israel. How were they received? How was their integration into Israeli society?

Imagine how complicated it would be if your new home (i.e. Israel):

- Was not really ready for you;
- or your new country was under all kinds of pressure, such as war, mass influx, or poor economic conditions; or
- if there was little food, poor housing, many enemies?

That was the situation in the newly founded State of Israel when hundreds of thousands of Jews who were fleeing from Arab countries began arriving.

At least the Mizrahi Jews had a place to go! They had dreamt about the land of Israel and prayed for it for millennia. When the State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948, the Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel stated:

The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles; it will foster the development of the country for all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex...”

This position was further affirmed in 1950 by the Law of Return that granted every Jew the automatic right to immigrate to Israel and become a citizen of the state.

➤ Possible Comment: Ask students to imagine:

1. What it felt like to be “a free person in your own land” for the first time – (derived from the Hatikvah’s **להיות עם חפשי בארצנו**)
2. Or to sing Hatikvah in such a setting -- where you were a full citizen and not just a tolerated, second class citizen -dhimmi?

➤ Point out:

1. With the gates opened wide after statehood, over 687,000 Jews came to Israel's shores. In three years, by 1951, this influx of immigrants more than doubled Israel’s 1948 Jewish population. Imagine what would happen to any major city of country that doubled its population in three years!
2. This absorption was not easy. Ask “Why?”
 - a) The new state was emerging from a blistering war of independence.
 - b) The economy was in dire shape – in no condition to provide jobs and housing to hundreds of thousands of immigrants - including survivors of the Holocaust; the surviving Jewish communities of Bulgaria Poland and Romania; and nearly all of the Jewish communities of Libya, Yemen and Iraq.

But there was no choice or question! Israel would absorb these new immigrants because its purpose was to serve as a safe haven for all Jews in peril.

3. It would be false to say that the new immigrants did not encounter many adjustment difficulties. They did -- but everyone worked together to cope with the challenges and assimilate the new population as best they could, with limited resources and under continuing threat of war from surrounding Arab countries.

10) After so many years, Jews who have been absorbed in Israel and elsewhere still posses rights as former refugees.

There is no “statute of limitations” on the rights of refugees – meaning; that even with the passage of time, refugees do not lose their rights. By way of example:

- former refugees can petition for redress for the mass violations of their human rights;
- If they had a bank account, they never lose their right to any funds that were deposited in that account – even many years ago;
- If they belonged to a pension fund, they don’t lose their rights to receive the pension that they contributed to; and
- Just because these Jews from Arab countries were displaced; then went to another country to start over; to build new families and businesses; for many, to make a successful new life for themselves – these former refugees should not be penalized – they still possess rights for what they lost.

APPENDIX J:

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES SHEET

Help To Promote the Rights of Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

- 1) Encourage the leadership of every Jewish organization that you are affiliated with - Federation, Synagogue, Jewish school, organizations and chapters - to schedule a public education program on the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.
- 2) Monitor the media for reporting on Israel and the Middle East. Write letters to the editor or opinion pieces to express your concern when articles only refer to Palestinian refugees and the lack of coverage on the displacement of up to 1,000,000 Jews from the Arab countries.
- 3) Contact your Senators and Members of Congress (meet, call or write) urging them to support the bi-partisan resolutions on 'Middle East Refugees' now before the Congress that call for equal rights for Jewish refugees from Arab countries.
- 4) Communicate with President George W. Bush urging his support for the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries. The White House has a comment line where you will be connected to a live person 10am-4pm EST) at 1-202-456-1111. Letters can be faxed to the office of the Public Liaison in the White House (fax number - 202-456-6218).
- 5) Encourage your Mizrahi family members, friends, colleagues etc. to register their family's historical narrative and to document their lost assets. Underscore the importance of recording this evidence, necessary to assert the legal rights of Jews displaced from Arab countries.
- 6) Volunteer to be trained to take testimony to document the family histories and catalogue the losses of Jews who were displaced from Arab countries.
- 7) Register your name to receive a regular newsletter that will provide up-to-date details on upcoming events in your city and resources available for community programming.

For all of the above, you can download information and documentation at www.justiceforjews.com; e-mail *Justice for Jews from Arab Countries* at infor@justiceforjews.com or call (917) 606-8262

APPENDIX K:

EVALUATION FORM

Please fill out this evaluation form after completing the two session curriculum. If you have suggestions on other creative ways to sensitize your students to the issue, you are encouraged to send them to info@justiceforjews.com, where they may be posted. Your feedback is very important and will enable us to maximize the effectiveness of this educational unit. Thank you for your time and thoughtfulness.

1. Rate the following components on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most positive) in terms of how your, and your class needs were met:

Component	Clarity of Instructions	Effectiveness of Materials	Stimulated New Learning	General Student Reactions
<i>Teachers' Guide</i>				
<i>Session I</i>				
<i>Registration and Research Activity</i>				
<i>Session II</i>				
<i>Optional Activities</i>				
<i>Resource Materials</i>				

2. What was the most effective component of the Unit?

3. What was the least effective component of the unit?

4. What is the one thing you would like to add/change?

- 5 Other comments.....

Please return completed Evaluation Forms to: info@justiceforjews.com or by mail at: JJAC, 15 W. 16th St., 6th floor, New York, NY 10011 ; or by fax at: (212) 294-8348

REGISTRATION AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES: INSTRUCTIONS

Topic:	Jews from Arab Countries: Interview and Research
Subject Areas:	Communication skills; Israel Studies, Analytical/ Higher Order Thinking, Reading, Writing
Type of Lesson	Follow Up Assignment/Project

GOALS

1. Students will explore the plight and flight of Jews in various Arab countries; and
2. Students will collect registration data from *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jewish interviewees.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will recognize the long and varied existence of Jewish communities in Arab countries before Jews were displaced;
2. Students will comprehend the losses suffered by *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jew in having to leave their homes in their place of birth;
3. Students will gain interview and/or research skills (either by conducting interviews or in-depth research).

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY # 1: Interview and Registration

As one follow up assignment or project, for those able to, students can interview a *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jew who came from an Arab country. This could be anyone the students know - a family member; a teacher at school; a member of their synagogue; etc.

MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY # 1

1. Introduction and Registration Form with instructions (See below, this section, p. 26)
2. Pre-Interview training material; (See below, this section, p. 28)
3. Interview Set-Up and Outline; (See below, this section, p. 30)
4. List of questions for students to conduct the interview. (See below, this section, p. 31)

POTENTIAL ACTIVITY # 2: RESEARCH ON COUNTRY PROFILES

Students can conduct meaningful research on the variety of experiences for Jews and Jewish communities in up to 10 different Arab countries.

The teacher can divide the class into small groups Each group could chose one of 10 Arab countries – Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Aden. Each has a different Jewish history but the commonality throughout is the displacement of Jews from these countries. From up to 1,000,000 Jews at the turn of the century, fewer than 7,000 Jews remain in all these Arab countries today.

The groups could research:

- a. Life as it Was (before the 20th century);
- b. Changing Times (Plight of Jews under Muslim rule)
- c. Flight and Displacement (From their country of birth); and
- d. Resettlement (Rebuilding new lives In Israel and elsewhere).

If possible, each group can then give their report to the class during Session II.

MATERIALS FOR ACTIVITY # 2

1. An outline on how to research and prepare a “country outline” for presentation to the class (See below, this section, p. 33)
2. Webography listing sites that provide information on the history and the life of Jews in different Arab countries (See below, this section, p. 34)

ACTIVITY # 1: INTRODUCTION AND REGISTRATION FORM

For Students Able to Interview a Sephardi-Mizrahi Jew

Dear Student:

Just imagine -- by doing one task, you can make a real difference by recording Jewish history and ensuring rights for Jews from Arab countries.

How's that possible? Simply, you and thousands of other students around the world are collecting the personal stories of Jews who were displaced from Arab countries. This information is being gathered to record and preserve the history of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were forced to flee their native homes in Arab countries.

Why is this important? As you learned from the film “*The Forgotten Refugees*” the word ‘refugees’ in the context of the Middle East must include the over 850,000 Jews uprooted since 1948 from thousands of Jewish communities. Their families had lived in the region for 2,500 years -- fully a 1,000 years before the advent of Islam.

They were forgotten but now it is only fair that the Jewish refugees’ stories be told. Their history and cultural contributions should be recognized and celebrated, too. And this is what this activity is all about.

How then can you help accomplish this goal? Follow the interview outline that will be provided to you. It should help you – and the person you interview -- get the most out of the discussion. It is important to remember that there is a dual focus for the interview:

1. The interview and the interviewees – the collection of their information; and
2. Collecting your reactions to share with the class

Good luck – and thank you.



REGISTRATION FORM

INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS AND REDRESS CAMPAIGN

Sephardic Jews in 20 countries are now recording their family histories and registering the communal and individual losses of Jewish refugees who were uprooted from Arab countries.

SECTION 1. TO BE COMPLETED BY PERSON FILLING OUT THIS REGISTRATION FORM											
Name			Address				City, State				
Zip/Postal Code		Country		Phone Number			E-mail Address				
If you are filling this Registration Form out for someone else, what is your relationship to them:											
SECTION 2. FAMILY REGISTRATION [Name of person or family that left the Arab country]											
FAMILY NAME:				FIRST NAME:				MAIDEN NAME OR OTHER:			
SECTION 3. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN											
ADEN	ALGERIA	EGYPT	LEBANON	LIBYA	MOROCCO	IRAN	IRAQ	SUDAN	SYRIA	TUNISIA	YEMEN
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Name of Village, Town or City In Country of Origin?					Occupation?			Year of Departure?			
Where did person go after leaving country of origin?					How long did they stay there?			Where did they finally resettle?			
SECTION 4. LOST ASSETS [Please list any assets confiscated or abandoned in the country of origin.]											
Family Assets (homes, business, property, pensions, etc.)						Communal Assets (synagogues, schools, cemeteries, etc.)					

Completed registration forms will be hand delivered to Israel's *Ministry of Justice* where they will be catalogued and preserved. When and if necessary, the information gathered may be used as the factual basis necessary to assert the rights of Jewish refugees displaced from Arab countries and Iran. All information will remain strictly confidential at all times.

Please fill out and mail this Registration Form to:

JUSTICE FOR JEWS FROM ARAB COUNTRIES • 15 West 16th Street • 6TH Fl. • New York, NY 10011 USA

Phone: 917-606-8262 - Fax: 212-294-8348 - E-Mail: info@justiceforjews.com

PRE-INTERVIEW TRAINING: HOW TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

1. How to prepare for this (and any) interview: By previewing the material and gaining some information about the person and his/ her country of origin, you'll be able to ask more intelligent and relevant questions; respond thoughtfully to any questions the interviewee might pose; and later reflect deeply about the information you heard. It is important to:
 - *Practice succinctly describing the purpose of the interview.* If you can't say it, you don't understand it.
 - *Outline in your mind and concretely state the type of information you hope to get by the end of the interview.*
 - Review the registry form.
 - *Call before* to set the appointment and then again to confirm the appointment [pre-call script forthcoming: e.g. who you are; what you are doing; why you are calling them; how long it will take; why their participation is so important, etc.]
 - *Preview the material:* To better understand what is being mentioned you have to do some preparation about the topic in general (read materials) and the person being interviewed:
 - i. For example, if you know from which country the person fled, review specific material related to that country to familiarize yourself with names, words, history, etc.
 - ii. In addition to the questions on the registry form, jot down a few questions about which you are curious or that were generated by the material preview or the video, BUT
 - Go in with your ears open and without pre-conceptions.
 - Be especially aware of your personal appearance and grooming. If you want people to think you are on a serious mission, consider everything through their eyes: dress, demeanor, manner of speech. Act like a serious person on an important mission. *You are representing your school and undertaking an important responsibility.*
2. How to relate to interviewees: *Derech erez*, politeness, attentiveness, responsiveness, seriousness of purpose are the qualities of a good interviewer. Always be friendly, respectful, and pleasant. These attributes can help ensure your success in collecting the needed information. And a good sense of humor can also help. Therefore:
 - Always treat the interviewees with the utmost *respect*
 - *Listen.* Really listen.
 - *Respond* to his/ her questions and concerns (See attached Frequently Asked Questions)
3. Tips on conducting the interview:
 - *Be prompt.* Being late is just plain annoying and interferes with your ability to build trust with an informant.
 - If you are going to be late, call to let the informant know. Most informants understand that some delays cannot be avoided.
 - *Be prepared.* Arrive with all materials ready to use (other than quickly setting up the tape recorder, if you use one).
 - If you plan to record the interview, first ask the informant if he or she minds your doing so. Only after the informant provides permission should you turn on the tape recorder.
 - *Begin the interview by repeating the purpose.* Then ask the questions.

NOTE: As the interviewee responds to your questions, make sure that you clearly and completely understand the responses. If you do not, ask the person to clarify points that seem unclear, amplify points that seem ambiguous, and verify points (for this purpose, you might use closed questions, such as "Did you say that...")

Also: Interviewing successfully is a gentle art, so

- *Don't jump right into the questions.* Make some small talk to make the interviewee -- and yourself -- more comfortable.
- *Listen to the tone of the interviewee's voice* to know when to get into it and whether to push even more.
- *Always ask questions;* don't make speeches.
- Avoid "double-barreled" questions, that is, questions that really ask two things at once, such as "Were you in a Jewish School and did your father own a store?"
- Avoid negatives in questions; focus, instead, on the positive. Negative questions are also easily misunderstood.
- *Use clear – and, if necessary, simple language* so that your interviewee will understand your questions and terms, and be prepared to provide a clear definition.
- *Actively listen to what the participant says.* People provide you with information when they believe that you are listening to them.
- Whenever possible, use the informants own words as a means of reflecting back their own responses to encourage further discussion. For example, suppose the informant told you that "We often felt in danger."
You respond. "Really in danger?"
"Oh yes," the informant replies, and then will proceed to explain how.
- *Take notes, but also look at the informant.*
- *Before closing the interview, summarize the main points* with the informant to verify that you correctly understand the information provided.
- *Review the material on the registry form* to confirm you have it right.
- *Say thank you* when you are finished and even send a thank you note to the home afterwards.

4. How to make sure the information is usable: Data that is not able to passed on is useless, and a waste of your time and that of the interviewee, so:

- *Write legibly.*
- If you hear a word you do not understand, make sure to ask for a clarification.
- Get the spelling right (it can make the difference in proving the person's rights)
- Make sure that the registry kit is filled out completely

5. And how to learn even more!!!

- *Focus on the information from the interviewee.* Only afterwards jot down your reactions, including: what new thing did you learn; what did you not expect.
- Transcribe your notes

6. What to do with the information once you get it

- Review the form to make sure it is complete and legible
- Return it to teacher

INTRODUCTION FOR INTERVIEWER AND INTERVIEWEE

The International Rights and Redress Campaign was launched with the support of the Jewish leadership of 16 countries. The campaign seeks to:

- (1) *Record and publicize the mass violations of human rights suffered by Jews under Arab regimes; and*
- (2) *Document the loss of extensive communal and individual assets. Once collected, the documentation will be catalogued and preserved by a special unit in Israel's Ministry of Justice.*

Once collected, this documentation will be catalogued by a special unit in Israel's Ministry of Justice, established to assert the rights of Jews from Arab countries.

It is imperative for anyone who was displaced from an Arab country, or their descendants, to register their stories and record their losses. If we do not do so now, before memories fade and living witnesses pass on, this important part of Jewish history and Sephardic legacy will be lost forever.

Why is it important now to register the family narratives and losses of Jews who were displaced from Arab countries?

- 1) If *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jews don't tell their story, who will? Our children and grandchildren need to know where our people came from and what they lived through.
- 2) Only 30% of those who left Arab countries are still alive to tell their stories. This is our last, best chance to record this period of Jewish history; to ensure that the story and legacy of 3,500 years of *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jewish life in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf is not lost forever.
- 3) We must collect the evidence to prove false those in the Arab world who claim that there were never any large Jewish communities; that Jews were treated well; and that they left of their own free will. We must refute these distortions of history.
- 4) We must register the testimonies and preserve the evidence that will comprise any future claims for reparations for the individual and communal properties and other assets that were expropriated and/or lost.
- 5) We must ensure justice for Jewish refugees from Arab countries, for no peace can be reached without recognition of, and redress for, the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities and the displacement of up to one million Jews from North Africa, the Gulf and the Middle East.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERVIEWS

1. Please tell me your name as you use it here in the U.S. and as you were called in your home country.
2. Where were you born and when?
3. Who lived with you, Parents, grandparents, siblings, extended family? What were their names? Who lived near you in your family? How far away?
4. Where did your family live? In what city and what neighborhood?
5. What was the neighborhood like? Please describe it to me. What did it look like, what were the sounds?
6. What was your favorite food as a child? Favorite song? Who did you play with? What was your favorite thing to do as a child? Where was your favorite place? What was your favorite Jewish Holiday?
7. Who taught you to read, do skilled things (sewing, cooking, fixing things, playing games)?
8. What school(s) did you attend? How were you treated in school as a Jew?
9. What was religious life like for you? Did your family practice Judaism through synagogue worship? Would you consider your family assimilated?
10. What business was your family in, how did they make a living?
11. How were your relationships with the neighbors? Jewish and Muslim?
12. What happened to your family as you grew up regarding their business, relations with officials and neighbors?
13. What made your family leave the country? How did you leave?
14. How much time did you have to leave? Were you able to sell or give away personal items? Who did you sell or give them to?
15. What was the most difficult part of leaving? What did you miss most immediately after you left? What do you still miss?
16. What pictures, documents, papers do you have that can help you remember what life was like, what you or your family owned and what you did?

17. Where did you go? Did you stay in Israel, in the transition camps? What was that like? How long were you there? Why did you leave?
18. If interviewee is from Iraqi – Ask about the *Farhoud*
19. If interviewee is from Egypt – Ask about Prison camps
20. If interviewee is from Libya - Ask about Riots
21. Ask about their recollections of living in the in Middle East. What do you remember about 1948, Israel's establishment, 1956 Suez Canal and Sinai, 1967 – 6 day war ,and 1973 Yom Kippur war. What was it like? What happened to you? What did you see? What did people say to you?

.....

**MAKE SURE EVERY INTERVIEWEE
FILLS OUT TO REGISTRATION FORM**

Activity # 2: HOW TO PREPARE A ‘COUNTRY PROFILE’

Students will research and present a ‘country profile’ on one of the 10 Arab countries in which Jews lived in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region. A listing of appropriate websites by country is provided to assist students in this task.

This following suggested order can be useful for teaching and discussion purposes. However, it can be noted that, especially during phases one and two, there was great overlap and a long history of second-class citizenship.

Among the issues to be addressed in a ‘country profile’ include:

Phase 1: Life As it Was – Before the 20th century

- When and how did Jews arrive in the country?
- How many Jews lived there at the turn of the century? In 1940? Today?
- Describe Jewish life in Arab countries?
- What roles did they play in society economic, political, cultural, etc.
- What are the important contributions of Sephardi-Mizrahi Jews to Judaism?

Phase 2: Changing Jewish Life under Muslim Rule

- Concept of *Dhimmi*
- Discrimination against Jews
- Pogroms
- Expulsions

Phase 3: Flight and Displacement – Life in the 20th Century

- Why did Jews decide to leave?
- When did they leave?
- How did they leave?
- What were they able to bring out?

Phase 4: Resettlement – Building New Lives in Israel and Elsewhere

- Where did they go?
- How were they received in their new country?
- What hardships did they have to endure?
- How are they faring today?

WEBOGRAPHY: COUNTRY SPECIFIC REFERENCE MATERIAL

Aden	Article on the Jews of Iraq and the country of Aden. http://www.dangoor.com/issue76/articles/76019.htm
Aden	Photos from the final days of the Jewish community at Aden. http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~kraut/Family_Photos/pages/Aden.html
Algeria	Personal narrative of an Algerian Jew. http://www.jimena.org/Benhamou.htm
Algeria	Story of the Jews of Algeria from the Museum of the Diaspora. http://www.bh.org.il/communities/Archive/Oran.asp
Algeria	Basic information on Jewish life in Algeria. http://www.kosherdelight.com/Algeria.htm
Algeria	Lists of Jewish Voters from Algeria. http://www.sephardicstudies.org/constantine.html
Egypt	20 th Century exodus of Jews from Egypt. http://www.hsje.org/second_exodus.htm
Egypt	Displacement information and statistics of Jews from Arab countries. from the Historical Society of Jews from Egypt. http://www.hsje.org/displacement_of_Jews_from_Arab_c.htm
Egypt	Newsletters, publications, photos and information about the Jews of Egypt. created by the <i>International Association of Jews from Egypt</i> . www.iajegypt.org
Iran	Article on Jewish life in Persia. http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/049/html/page8.html
Iran	History of the Jews of Persia. http://www.parstimes.com/history/jews_persia.html
Iran	The Jews of Iran. http://www.sephardicstudies.org/iran.html
Iraq	Site about Iraqi Jews that left Baghdad during the '60s and '70s. http://www.samba.co.il/iraqijews/
Iraq	'The Scribe' is an online journal of Iraqi/Babylonian Jewish history. http://www.dangoor.com/scribe.html
Iraq	Article on the Jews of Iraq and the country of Aden. http://www.dangoor.com/issue76/articles/76019.htm
Libya	A reference list of books about the Jews of Libya. http://www-geography.berkeley.edu/projectsresources/libya/biblio.html
Libya	Explanation of the history of Jews from Libya with testimonies, newsletters and cultural artifacts. http://geoimages.berkeley.edu/libyajew

Morocco	Article on the Jews of Morocco http://www.sefarad.org/publication/lm/017/morocco.html
Morocco	A long list of links about the Jews of Morocco. http://rickgold.home.mindspring.com/links1.htm#Moroccan%20Jews
Morocco	Focusing on the history, culture and synagogues of Jewish Morocco. http://www.jewishglobe.com/morocco
Morocco	Jewish life in Fez, Morocco. http://www.bh.org.il/communities/Archive/Fez.asp
Morocco	Article by the WZO on Morocco. http://www.wzo.org.il/en/resources/view.asp?id=1446
Sudan	Book on the Jews of Sudan. http://www.orthohelp.com/geneal/book.htm
Syria	Well written article on the history of the Jews of Aleppo, Syria. http://www.manfredlehmann.com/sieg292.html
Tunisia	Article on modern-day Tunisian Jews. http://lexicorient.com/tunisia/hara_kbira.htm
Tunisia	Academic paper on the Jews of Tunisia. http://www.u.arizona.edu/%7Eshaked/Tunisia/Jews.html
Tunisia	Tunisian-Jewish culture http://www.harissa.com/accueileng.htm
Yemen	Well written article on the history of the Jews of Yemen. http://www.manfredlehmann.com/sieg282.html
Yemen	Religious and cultural information on the Jewish community from Yemen. http://www.chayas.com/
Yemen	Site about Temani Heritage, presenting an overview of life for the Jews from Yemen. http://www.temaniheritage.org.uk/history.html

JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB COUNTRIES: THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

This document provides an overview of the history, plight and flight of Jews in 10 Arab countries in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region.

THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Historically, Jews and Jewish communities have existed in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region for more than 2,500 years, in such countries as Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Aden.

Fully one thousand years before the advent of Islam, Jews in substantial numbers resided in what are to-day Arab countries. Following the Moslem conquest of the region, for centuries under Islamic rule, Jews were considered second class citizens but were nonetheless permitted limited religious, educational, professional, and business opportunities.

Upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the status of Jews in Arab countries changed dramatically as virtually all Arab countries declared war, or backed the war against Israel. This rejection by the Arab world of a Jewish state in their ancient homeland was the event that triggered a dramatic surge in a longstanding, pattern of abuse and state-legislated discrimination initiated by Arab regimes and their peoples to make life for Jews in Arab countries simply untenable. Jews were either uprooted from their countries of residence or became subjugated, political hostages of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In virtually all cases, as Jews fled, individual and communal properties were seized and/or confiscated without any compensation provided by the Arab governments involved.

The result – from an estimated 1,000,000 Jews resident in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region at the turn of the century, today less than 5,000 Jews remain in Arab countries.

Little is heard about these Jewish refugees because they did not remain refugees for long. Of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees between 1948 and 1972, some two-thirds were resettled in Israel at great expense – others emigrated elsewhere – all without any compensation provided by the Arab governments who confiscated their possessions.

Securing rights and redress for Jews displaced from Arab countries is an issue that has not yet been adequately addressed by the international community. In fact, there were more former Jewish refugees uprooted from Arab countries (over 850,000) than there were Palestinians (UN estimate: 726,000) who became refugees as a result of the 1948 war when numerous Arab nations attacked the newly established State of Israel.

THE MASS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Immediately before and after the Arab world sought to destroy the newly created State of Israel between 1948-49, the rights and security of Jews resident in Arab countries came under legal and physical assault by their own governments and the general populations. By way of example, in **Syria**, as a result of anti-Jewish pogroms that erupted in Aleppo in 1947, 7,000 of the town's 10,000 Jews fled in terror. In **Iraq**, 'Zionism' became a capital crime. More than 70 Jews were killed by bombs in the Jewish Quarter of Cairo, **Egypt**. After the French left **Algeria**, the authorities issued a variety of anti-Jewish decrees prompting nearly all of the 160,000 Jews to flee the country. After the 1947 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Partition Plan, Muslim rioters engaged in bloody pogroms in **Aden** and **Yemen**, which killed 82 Jews. In numerous countries, Jews were expelled or had their citizenship revoked (e.g. **Libya**).

The uprooting of ancient Jewish communities from some 10 Muslim countries did not occur by happenstance. Official decrees and legislation enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews and other minorities; expropriated their property; stripped them of their citizenship; and other means of livelihood. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions.

These state-sanctioned repressive measures, coupled often with violence and repression, precipitated a mass displacement of Jews and caused the Jewish refugee problem in the Middle East.

THE DISCRIMINATORY RESPONSE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

TO THE PLIGHT OF JEWISH REFUGEES

From 1948 onward, the response of the international community to assist Palestinian refugees arising out of the Arab-Israeli conflict was immediate and aggressive. During that same period, there was no concomitant United Nations' response, nor any comparable international action, to alleviate the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

The sole comparison that can be made between Palestinian and Jewish refugees is that both were determined to be *bona fide* refugees under international law, albeit each according to different internationally accepted definitions and statutes – the former covered by UNRWA and the latter by the UNHCR.

As far as the response of the United Nations is concerned, the similarity ends there. The contrasts, however, are stark:

- a) Since 1947, there have been over 681 UN General Assembly resolutions dealing with virtually every aspect of the Middle East and the Arab Israeli conflict.
- b) Fully 101 of these UN resolutions refer directly and specifically to the 'plight' of Palestinian refugees.
- c) In none of these 681 UN resolutions on the Middle East is there a specific reference to, nor any expression of concern for, the 856,000 Jews living in, or having been displaced from, Arab countries.

- d) Numerous UN agencies and organizations were involved in a variety of efforts, or others were specifically created, to provide protection, relief, and assistance to Palestinian refugees. No such attention and assistance was forthcoming from these UN agencies for Jewish refugees from Arab countries.
- e) Since 1948, billions of dollars have been spent by the international community - by the UN, its affiliated entities and member states - to provide relief and assistance to Palestinian refugees. During that same period, no such international financial support was ever provided to ameliorate the plight of Jewish refugees.

THE LEGAL CASE FOR RIGHTS AND REDRESS

In the context of the Middle East, it would be an injustice to ignore the rights of Jews from Arab countries. As a matter of law and equity, it would not be appropriate to recognize the claim of Palestinian refugees to redress without recognizing a right to redress for former Jewish refugees from Arab countries. The legal case of displaced Jews to redress is as strong as, if not stronger than, the case of Palestinian refugees.

Recognition of the past is essential to the integrity of the Middle East peace process. Rejection of memory is a rejection of peace. No just, comprehensive Middle East peace can be reached without recognition of, and redress for, the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa by Islamic regimes hostile to the State of Israel.

The call to secure rights and redress for Jews who were forced to flee Arab countries is not a campaign against Palestinian refugees; nor is it about initiating legal proceedings to seek compensation. It is a legitimate effort to ensure that the rights of all Middle East refugees be placed on the international political agenda as a quest for truth and justice and that their rights be secured as a matter of law and equity.

The first injustice was the mass violation of the rights of Jews in Arab countries. To-day, we must not allow a second injustice – for the international community to recognize rights for one victim population - Palestinian refugees - without recognizing equal rights for other victims of that very same Middle East conflict - Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I) HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Who are the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa?

- There has been an uninterrupted presence of large Jewish communities in the Middle East from time immemorial. 8th and 6th century BCE marks the beginnings of the ancient Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa.
- Hundreds of thousands of Jews resided in Arab countries for many centuries, in some cases, more than 2,000 years before the advent of Islam. Today, there remain a few thousand Jews scattered in a number of Arab states.
- Through a process of Arabization and Islamicization, these regions are now known as the "Arab world." Yet, non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities, the original indigenous inhabitants, remained as minorities in their own lands.
- While the Jews' presence under Muslim rule was marked by some golden periods of prosperity, however, Jews were often subjected to punishing taxes, forced to live in cramped ghetto-like quarters and relegated to the lower-levels of the economic and social strata.

How many Jews lived in Arab countries?

- In 1948, there were roughly 870,000 Jews living in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.
- Today, less than 7,000 remain in these same countries.

What was the status of the Jews?

- Under Islamic law Jews were considered second class citizens (*dhimmis*) but were given limited religious, professional and business opportunities. In some cases, their condition improved temporarily with the advent of colonialist influence on the Arab countries.

II) THE REFUGEES: JEWS AND ARABS

Why did they leave?

- After their rejection of the partition plan, virtually all-Arab countries declared war against the newly established State of Israel. This made the situation for Jews in Arab countries untenable, and caused a mass exodus from many countries. Some of the reasons why people left include:
 - Discrimination/ Anti-Jewish legislation: Tunisia
 - Fear of violence/ rioting: Yemen, Egypt, Morocco
 - History of Fascist/Nazi persecution: Libya, Tunisia
 - Rising tension of the Arab/Israeli conflict: Egypt

Where did the Jewish refugees go?

- Israel struggled to resettle some 600,000 at great cost. Some 300,000 others built new lives in France, Britain, Italy, Australia, Latin America, Canada and the US.

What were the properties lost?

- Personal (e.g. homes, businesses, land, pensions, benefits)
- Assets belonging to the community or collective (e.g. schools, synagogues, hospitals and cemeteries.)
- No systematic, comprehensive compilation of records and claims has ever been done, although the World Organization for Jews from Arab Countries put the value of Jewish assets left behind at \$100 billion.

Why has little been heard about these Jewish refugees?

- Because they did not remain refugees for long, and were successfully integrated by Israel and other host countries.

Do the Jews wish to ‘return’?

- There was an exchange of almost equal numbers of Arab and Jewish refugees between Israel and the Arab world. Virtually no Jews wish to ‘return’ to Arab countries. These Jewish refugees are living proof that all refugees can start afresh provided their host countries have the will to resettle them.

Why is the issue of the Jewish refugees central?

- History: the truth about the Jewish refugees must be told. Too many people view the Middle East conflict through a distorted prism which expunges the Jewish refugee narrative.
- Morality and legality: the plight of the Jewish refugees is an unresolved human rights issue. There is a moral imperative that justice be done and that the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries assumes its rightful place on the international agenda.
- Peace: for any peace process to be credible and enduring, all outstanding issues must be addressed.

What did the UN do for Jewish refugees?

- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees recognized displaced Jews as *bona fide* refugees but offered no help. The UN General Assembly has not passed a single resolution on the plight of Jewish refugees, whilst it has passed 101 resolutions about the Palestinian Arab refugees and dedicated an agency, UNWRA, to their exclusive care.

Do the Jewish refugees feature in blueprints for Middle East peace?

- UN security council resolution 242, the Madrid peace conference, the Road Map and the bilateral agreements between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians all refer to a just solution of the 'refugee problem' – never distinguishing between Jews and Arabs.

III) INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS AND REDRESS CAMPAIGN

Is the campaign for Jewish refugees a “tit-for-tat” response to Palestinian claims?

- The legitimate call to secure rights and redress for former Jews displaced from Arab countries is not a campaign against Palestinian refugees. It is a “stand alone” campaign. It would be inaccurate and counterproductive to link the legitimacy of the rights for Jews displaced from Arab countries to the issues concerning Palestinian refugees. They are neither identical, nor symmetrical.

Is the campaign for Jewish refugees all about compensation?

- This is not a campaign about money or about initiating legal proceedings. It is a campaign to inject this issue into the international political agenda as a quest for truth and justice.

Shouldn't the Palestinian issue be dealt with separately from the Jewish refugees from Arab states?

- Two Middle East refugee populations were created as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict: one Palestinian and one Jewish. Both issues must be dealt with in the context of the Middle East peace process.

Wasn't the Arab backlash against Middle Eastern and North African Jews understandable because of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

- No. If the Jews of Arab states were truly seen by their neighbors and governments as equal citizens then the anti-Jewish rioting, massacres and expulsions would not have taken place.

Why not just give Jews from Arab states the ‘right of return’ to their former homes?

- Jewish refugees do not want to return to countries that persecuted them. Arab regimes remain hostile to Israel and Jews. There was a population exchange – Palestinians went to some Arab countries and Jews came to Israel.

Were Jewish refugees from Arab states treated differently than the Arab refugees from Palestine?

- Yes. Jewish refugees were economically and socially absorbed into Israel, whereas the Palestinian Arab refugees were deliberately herded into refugee camps by their host Arab states, to be used as a political weapon in their struggle against Israel.
- Palestinian Arab refugees have received massive political and material support from the United Nations. Jewish refugees from Arab states received no financial support whatsoever from the international community and have not been granted any international political recognition of their plight.

IV) REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

Why is it important now to register the family narratives and losses of Jews who were displaced from Arab countries?

- 1) If *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jews don't tell their story, who will? Our children and grandchildren need to know where our people came from and what they lived through.
- 2) Only 30% of those who left Arab countries are still alive to tell their stories. This is our last, best chance to record this period of Jewish history; to ensure that the story and legacy of 3,500 years of *Sephardi-Mizrahi* Jewish life in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf is not lost forever.
- 3) We must collect the evidence to prove false those in the Arab world who claim that there were never any large Jewish communities; that Jews were treated well; and that they left of their own free will. We must refute these distortions of history.
- 4) We must register the testimonies and preserve the evidence that will comprise any future claims for reparations for the individual and communal properties and other assets that were expropriated and/or lost.
- 5) We must ensure justice for Jewish refugees from Arab countries, for no peace can be reached without recognition of, and redress for, the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities and the displacement of up to one million Jews from North Africa, the Gulf and the Middle East.

What can we do to help?

- The Israeli Cabinet passed a resolution in December 2003 throwing its full weight behind the campaign for Jewish refugees. Jewish communities should be raising the issue whenever they can. They should organize lectures, film shows and publicize the need to document losses.
- For a list of what individuals can do to help, please go to: justiceforjews.com/action.pdf



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BACKGROUND ON MIDDLE EAST REFUGEES

- When the issue of ‘refugees’ is raised within the context of the Middle East, people invariably refer to ‘Palestinian refugees’, not Jews displaced from Arab countries. Neither the mass violations of human rights nor the displacement of Jews from Arab countries has ever been adequately addressed by the international community.
- Jews and Jewish communities have existed in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region for many centuries. Following the Moslem conquest of the region, under Islamic rule, Jews were considered second-class citizens but were, for a period of time, permitted limited religious, educational, professional and business opportunities.
- This changed in the 20th century, as witnessed by a consistent, wide-spread pattern of persecution and the mass violations of the human rights of Jewish minorities in Arab countries. Official decrees and legislation enacted by Arab regimes denied human and civil rights to Jews and other minorities; expropriated their property; stripped them of their citizenship; and other means of livelihood. Jews were often victims of murder; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture; and expulsions.
- Upon the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the status of Jews in Arab countries worsened dramatically as many Arab countries declared war, or backed the war against Israel. Jews were either uprooted from their countries of longtime residence or became subjugated, political hostages of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- The result - from over 1,000,000 Jews resident in North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region at the turn of the century, it is estimated that less than 5,000 Jews remain to-day in Arab countries.
- As a matter of law and equity, history reveals that there were two refugee populations created as a result of the longstanding dispute in the Middle East.
- It would constitute an injustice, were the international community to recognize rights for one victim population - Palestinian refugees - without recognizing equal rights for other victims of that very same Middle East conflict - former Jewish, Christian and other refugees from Arab countries.

FACTS ON MIDDLE EAST REFUGEES

- For over 2,500 years, Jews in substantial numbers resided in areas that are today Arab countries (e.g. Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, etc.) - fully 1,000 years before the advent of Islam.
- The exodus of Jewish refugees from Arab countries occurred mainly between 1940s and the 1970s. In fact, there were more Jews displaced from Arab countries (856,000)¹ than there were Palestinians who became refugees as a result of the 1948 Arab Israeli war (726,000)².
- On two separate occasions the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) ruled that Jews fleeing from Arab countries were indeed '*bona fide*' refugees who "fall under the mandate of my (UNHCR) office".³
- The statistics are stark: **856,000 Jews from Arab countries in 1948 - reduced to 7,800 in 2001.**

	1948	1958	1968	1976	2001
Aden	8,000	800	0	0	0
Algeria	140,000	130,000	1,500	1,000	0
Egypt	75,000	40,000	1,000	400	100
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	100
Lebanon	5,000	6,000	3,000	400	100
Libya	38,000	3,750	100	40	0
Morocco	265,000	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,700
Syria	30,000	5,000	4,000	4,500	100
Tunisia	105,000	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500
Yemen	55,000	3,500	500	500	200
TOTAL⁴	856,000	475,050	72,600	32,190	7,800

- Since 1947, the United Nations General Assembly's predominant focus has been on Palestinian refugees:
 - a) 681 resolutions on the Middle East conflict, including 101 resolutions on Palestinian refugees;
 - b) Numerous UN agencies and organizations mandated or newly created to provide protection and relief to Palestinian refugees; and
 - c) Over the last 58 years, tens of billions of dollars have been disbursed by the international community to provide services and assistance to Palestinian refugees.
- During that same period, there were no UN resolutions; no support provided by UN agencies; nor any financial assistance forthcoming from the international community to ameliorate the plight of Jewish and other refugees from Arab countries.
- In all relevant international bilateral or multilateral agreements, (i.e. UN Resolution 242, *The Road Map*, *The Madrid Conference*, etc.), the reference to 'refugees' is generic, allowing for the recognition and inclusion of *all* Middle East refugees - Jews, Christians and other minorities.

¹ Estimates based on UN document "Trends and Characteristics of International Migration since 1950 – Refugee Movements and Population Transfers" (UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, Demographic Study No. 64 ST/ESA/Ser. A/64).

² United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, P. 18; United Nations. *Annual Report of the Director General of UNWRA*, Doc. 5224/5223. 25 November 1952

³ Mr. Auguste Lindt, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Report of the UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session – Geneva 29 January to 4 February, 1957; and Dr. E. Jahn, Office of the UN High Commissioner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Document No. 7/2/3/Libya, July 6, 1967.

⁴ Figures derived from Maurice Roumani, '83; and the American Jewish Yearbooks- 1958-1988

WHY DID JEWS FROM ARAB COUYNTRIES GO TO ISRAEL

On May 14, 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. *Aliyah* - the ingathering of the exiles - is a fundamental aspiration of Zionism and the State of Israel.

The [Proclamation of the Establishment of the State of Israel](#) stated:

"The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the exiles; it will foster the development of the country for all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice, and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex..."

This was followed in 1950 by the [Law of Return](#), which granted every Jew the automatic right to immigrate to Israel and become a citizen of the state. With the gates wide open after statehood was declared, a wave of mass immigration brought 687,000 Jews to Israel's shores. By 1951, the number of immigrants more than doubled the Jewish population of the country in 1948. The immigrants included, inter alia, survivors of the Holocaust from displaced persons' camps in Germany, Austria and Italy; a majority of the Jewish communities of Bulgaria and Poland and one third of the Jews of Romania; and nearly all of the Jewish communities of Libya, Yemen and Iraq.



Ma'abara - camp for new immigrants during the early years of the state

The immigrants encountered many adjustment difficulties. The fledgling state had just emerged from the bruising war of independence, was in grievous economic condition, and found it difficult to provide hundreds of thousands of immigrants with housing and jobs. Much effort was devoted towards absorbing the immigrants: *ma'abarot* - camps of tin shacks and tents - and later permanent dwellings were erected; employment opportunities were created; the Hebrew language was taught; and the educational system was expanded and adjusted to meet the needs of children from many different backgrounds.

Additional mass immigration took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when immigrants arrived from the newly independent countries of North Africa, Morocco and Tunisia. Since the establishment of the State, more than two and a half million immigrants have arrived; their expertise and talents have contributed immeasurably to the country's economic, scientific, academic and cultural life.

WHY DO THEY COME?



The reasons why Jews immigrate to Israel run deep within the history, faith and psyche of the Jewish people. According to the Hebrew scriptures, God gave the Land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants for all time. The believing Jew, therefore, sees the Land as part of the religious/national heritage of the Jewish people, and attaches special merit to living there. Modern Zionism, the century-old political movement for the return of the exiled Jewish people to their historic homeland, is the secular side of this same coin: inspired by a mix of 19th century nationalism and centuries of Jewish homelessness and oppression, Zionism sees Israel as the Jewish homeland a place where all Jews can achieve fullest expression of their Jewish identity as well as a refuge for the persecuted.

These two approaches converge to make living in Israel an ultimate assertion of Jewishness, and immigrating there is considered by many Jews and Israelis to be an admirable and praiseworthy move. The Hebrew word for immigration (*aliyah*) means ascent or a spiritual going up. In marked contrast, therefore, to almost every other nation where immigrant communities are discouraged, restricted or regarded as second-rate citizens Israel not only welcomes its immigrants but also rejoices in them. It purposefully attracts them with job retraining, housing and tax concessions. A downswing in immigration figures is cause for national concern.

WHO COMES?

By far the largest numbers of immigrants come to Israel from what Israelis term the countries of distress places where Jews are unwelcome, harassed or actively persecuted. Throughout its 50 years, however, Israel has also welcomed hundreds of thousands of emigrants from the free world people driven principally by idealism. Some 200,000 have immigrated to Israel from America during this period, and more than double that number from Western Europe (not including Holocaust survivors).

Early Years of Statehood. The greatest influx of immigrants to Israel arrived during the first three years of statehood. Between 1948 and 1951, 688,000 people came, more than doubling the young country's Jewish population. Almost half these people came from post-Holocaust Europe from its displaced persons camps, detention centers and destroyed communities. Most of the others were from Islamic countries in Africa and the Middle East, where the establishment of Israel placed them in danger.

Israel helped as much as it could. Marseilles, for example, was turned into a take-off point for European immigrants. While they waited for ships, Israel, through the Jewish Agency, helped house and feed the immigrants, as well as teach them Hebrew. In May 1949, when the Imam of Yemen agreed to let 45,000 of the 46,000 Jews in his country leave, Israeli transport planes flew them home in the fabled Operation Magic Carpet. In 1951, in another magnificently organized airlift Operation Ezra and Nehemiah 121,000 Jews were brought to Israel from Iraq, ending 2,500 years of Jewish life there. Libyan Jewish life ended that same year, with the emigration of its 32,000 Jews to Israel.

Israel welcomed this flood of humanity with 123 transit camps, 260 new settlements and 78,000 housing units. By the mid-1950s, almost all the newcomers were in permanent housing.

Source: Foreign Ministry of the State of Israel



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Legal and Political Bases for the Rights of Former Jewish Refugees

In 2002, *Justice for Jews from Arab Countries* convened an international Committee of Legal Experts, Chaired by Prof. David Matas, that produced a report entitled: *“Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries: The Case for Rights and Redress”*. This report documents strong political and legal arguments for the legitimate rights of Jews displaced from Arab countries. The following are examples:

A) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

On two occasions, in 1957 and again in 1967, 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 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.”

--Mr. Auguste Lindt, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Report of the UNREF Executive Committee, Fourth Session – Geneva 29 January to 4 February, 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.”

--Dr. E. Jahn, Office of the UN High Commissioner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Document No. 7/2/3/Libya, July 6, 1967.

B) UN Resolution(s)

On November 22nd, 1967, the Security Council unanimously adopted, Resolution 242, laying down the principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Still considered the primary vehicle for resolving the Arab-Israel conflict, Resolution 242 stipulates that a comprehensive peace settlement should necessarily include *“a just settlement of the refugee problem.”* No distinction is made between Arab refugees and Jewish refugees.

The international community’s intention to have Resolution 242 include the rights of Jewish refugees is evidenced by the fact that during the UN debate, the Soviet Union’s delegation attempted to restrict the “just settlement” mentioned in Resolution 242 solely to Palestinian refugees. (S/8236, discussed by the Security Council at its 1382nd meeting of November 22, 1967, notably at paragraph

117, in the words of Ambassador Kouznetsov of the Soviet Union). This attempt failed clearly signaling the intention of the international community not to restrict the “just settlement of the refugee problem” merely to Palestinian refugees.

Moreover, Justice Arthur Goldberg, the United States’ Chief Delegate to the United Nations, who was instrumental in drafting the unanimously adopted U.N. Resolution 242, has pointed out that:

*“A notable omission in 242 is any reference to Palestinians, a Palestinian state on the West Bank or the PLO. The resolution addresses the objective of ‘achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem.’ This language presumably refers both to Arab and Jewish refugees, for about an equal number of each abandoned their homes as a result of the several wars....”*⁵

C) Multilateral Initiatives

- **The Madrid Conference**, which was first convened in October 1991, launched historic, direct negotiations between Israel and many of her Arab neighbors.

In his opening remarks at a conference convened to launch the multilateral process held in Moscow in January 1992, then-U.S. secretary of state James Baker made no distinction between Palestinian refugees and Jewish refugees in articulating the mandate of the Refugee Working Group as follows: *“The refugee group will consider practical ways of improving the lot of people throughout the region who have been displaced from their homes.”*⁶

- **The Roadmap** to Middle East peace currently being advanced by the Quartet (the U.N., EU, U.S., and Russia also refers in Phase III to an *“agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue”*, language applicable both to Palestinian and Jewish refugees.

D) Bilateral Arab-Israeli Agreements

Israeli agreements with her Arab neighbors allow for a case to be made that Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians have affirmed that a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict will require a “just settlement” of the “refugee problem” that will include recognition of the rights and claims of all Middle East refugees:

- **Israel – Egypt Agreements**

The *Camp David Framework for Peace in the Middle East* of 1978 (the “Camp David Accords”) includes, in paragraph A(1)(f), a commitment by Egypt and Israel to *“work with each other and with other interested parties to establish agreed procedures for a prompt, just and permanent resolution of the implementation of the refugee problem.”*

Article 8 of the *Israel – Egypt Peace Treaty* of 1979 provides that the *“Parties agree to establish a claims commission for the mutual settlement of all financial claims.”* Those claims include those of former Jewish refugees displaced from Egypt.

⁵ Goldberg, Arthur J., “Resolution 242: After 20 Years”, published in Security Interests, National Committee on American Foreign Policy, April 2002.

⁶ Remarks by Secretary of State James A. Baker, III before the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations on the Middle East, House of Unions, Moscow, January 28, 1992.

- Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty, 1994

Article 8 of the *Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty*, entitled “Refugees and Displaced Persons” recognizes, in paragraph 1, “*the massive human problems caused to both Parties by the conflict in the Middle East*”. Reference to massive human problems in a broad manner suggests that the plight of all refugees of “*the conflict in the Middle East*”, includes Jewish refugees from Arab countries.

- Israeli-Palestinian Agreements, 1993-

Almost every reference to the refugee issue in Israeli-Palestinian agreements, talks about “refugees”, without qualifying which refugee community is at issue, including the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993 {Article V (3)}, and the Interim Agreement of September 1995 {Articles XXXI (5)}, both of which refer to “refugees” as a subject for permanent status negotiations, without qualifications.

E) Recognition by Political Leaders

- Former **U.S. President Bill Clinton** made the following assertion after the rights of Jews displaced from Arab countries were discussed at ‘Camp David II’ in July, 2000 (From White House Transcript of Israeli television interview):

“There will have to be some sort of international fund set up for the refugees. There is, I think, some interest, interestingly enough, on both sides, in also having a fund which compensates the Israelis who were made refugees by the war, which occurred after the birth of the State of Israel. Israel is full of people, Jewish people, who lived in predominantly Arab countries who came to Israel because they were made refugees in their own land”.

- Former **U.S. President Jimmy Carter**, after successfully brokering the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, stated in a press conference on Oct. 27, 1977:

“Palestinians have rights... obviously there are Jewish refugees...they have the same rights as others do.”

- **Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin** stated, in a June 3rd, 2005 interview with the Canadian Jewish News which he later reaffirmed in a July 14, 2005 letter:

“A refugee is a refugee and that the situation of Jewish refugees from Arab lands must be recognized. All refugees deserve our consideration as they have lost both physical property and historical connections. I did not imply that the claims of Jewish refugees are less legitimate or merit less attention than those of Palestinian refugees.”

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SEPHARDIC AND MIDDLE EAST WEBSITES

Justice for Jews from Arab Countries	The coordinating body seeking rights and redress for Jews from Arab countries. http://www.justiceforjews.com
Palestine Facts	Explanation of exodus of Jews from Arab countries and links to web sites on related matters. from Palestine facts. http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_independence_refugees_Jews_why.php
Jews of Africa	History and narrative of the Jews from North Africa including Morocco, Tunisia and South Africa. Developed by freelance journalist, historian and activist Jay Sand. http://www.mindspring.com/~jaypsand/
Anti-Semitism in Arab Countries	Country by country breakdown of anti-Semitism, history and expulsion of Jews from Arab countries. From the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. http://www.axt.org.uk/
Statistics communities in Tunisia and Algeria	Contacts, statistics and information for those communities from Am Yisrael, 2004. http://www.amyisrael.co.il/africa/
Information on Jews from Arab countries	Information on Jews from various Arab countries before and after 1948, from the Citizens for Netanyahu. http://www.netanyahu.org/jewinarcounb.html
Portal about Jews from Arab countries	Links, history and cultural information. from Arab gateway http://www.al-bab.com/Arab/background/Jews.htm
JIMENA - Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa	News, views, historical survey and statistics about Jews that come from the Middle East and North Africa, sponsored by the JCRC of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. http://www.jimena.org
Jewish Losses	Asset loses and information on the Jews that fled Arab countries, issued by the <i>Israel Report</i> . http://www.cdn-friends-icej.ca/isreport/janfeb01/assets.html
Articles and Websites about Jewish refugees	Articles and Websites about Jewish refugees from Arab countries. From University at Buffalo Law School, Jewish Law Student Association. http://wings.buffalo.edu/law/jlsa/Jews_Arab_lands.htm
General overview of each Arab country and what it did to the Jews	Country breakdown and seizure information about Jews from Arab countries. from Houston based Freeman Center for Strategic Studies. http://www.freeman.org/m_online/jun98/zoa.htm
Relationship of Muslims and non-Muslims	Status of ethnic minorities under Islamic rule. From Bat Ye'or. http://www.dhimmitude.org/
Jewish Narratives	Outlines the narratives Jews from settlement to expulsion in Arab countries. http://www.eretzyisroel.org/~peters/arabjew.html

The Forgotten Middle East Refugees	Site containing papers and reports from Jews from Arab countries. Compiled by the International Forum For The Literature And Culture Of Peace. http://jac.up.co.il/
Articles on Jew from Arab Lands	Explores refugee issues and explanations on Jewish refugees from Arab countries. Includes links to media, essays and pictures. http://www.peacewithrealism.org/jewarab1.htm
Myths and Facts	Myths & Facts Online: The Treatment of Jews in Arab/Islamic Countries, by Mitchell G. Bard. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf15.html
Rights of Jews from Arab Lands	Israel Ministry of Justice web site. http://www.justice.gov.il/mojeng/rights+of+Jews+from+Arab+lands/
Research on Jews from Iraq	The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center is both a research institute and a museum, with an impressive collection of ethnographic material, Judaica, archival documents, books and manuscripts. http://babylonjewry.org.il/new/english/index.html
Sephardic Genealogy	Research Tool for Sephardic Genealogy / Jewish Genealogy http://www.sephardim.com
Out of Spain	<i>Out of Spain</i> is a collection of multi-media resource materials and student books for the Jewish classroom. http://www.outofspain.com
Sephardic Cooking Links	Links and information on Sephardic dishes from around the world. http://www.sephardim.com/html/recipes.html
Sephardic Holocaust Project	A site focusing on Sephardic Jews in relation to Holocaust studies, a subject often overlooked. http://www.holoseph.org
Sephardic History (in Spanish)	Website covering Sephardic history in Spain and then subsequent country resettlement. http://sefarad.rediris.es

Websites – Middle East Historical Maps

(Note: All Websites were screened and were functional and available as of August 2007.)

- 1) http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_middle_east.html
- 2) <http://www.mideastweb.org/palmaps.htm>
- 3) <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~gov46/>
- 4) <http://jewishhistory.huji.ac.il/links/Maps.htm>
- 5) <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/israel/maps-evolution.htm>
- 6) <http://www.netaxs.com/~iris/sizemaps.htm>
- 7) http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_maps.php

SELECTED VIDEOS AND FILMS

The Forgotten Refugees - A documentary film and educational portal about the mass exodus of up to one million Jews from Arab countries and Iran in the 20th century. By *The David Project*, non-profit educational initiative. Available through www.theforgottenrefugees.com

The Silent Exodus - And if they came from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq or from Yemen, if they had lost everything, even their relatives and their cemeteries, they were ready to rebuild their lives in the West and for many - in Israel - and try to forget their past—without ever asking for compensation or the right of return, or even wishing that their story be told. A film by documentarian *Pierre Rehov*. Available through www.pierrehov.com or Haggiti@hotmail.com

The Last Jews of Baghdad: End of an Exile, Beginning of a Journey - The Last Jews of Baghdad takes a historical and personal look at the persecution, torture, escape and exodus of over 160,000 Iraqi- Jews between the years 1940 through 2003. Hear from the survivors the real reasons why they left their beloved homeland of over 2500 years and if they will ever return. A documentary film by Carole Basri, Adriana Davis and Bryan Durr. Available through www.lastjewsofbaghdad.com

L'Exode oublié, Juifs des pays arabes (*Forgotten Exodus, Jews of Arab Countries*) Documentary film in French by Moïse Rahamni. Available through: www.moise.sefarad.org/ouvrages/arabe/index.html

Our Time To Speak - Video produced by the *Association of Jews from Egypt* and recording the testimonies of Jews who fled Egypt. Available from *Maurice Maleh*, 4 Folly Close, Radlett, Herts (01923 85 6801).

From Morocco to Montréal - Solly Lévy from Morocco to Montréal takes the audience into the world of Solly Lévy, a Sephardic Jew who came to Canada from Morocco in 1968. www.whitepinepictures.com

Jew of Iran - This film concentrates on Jews living in Iran presently, with an eye on recent historic developments. In Tehran, young and old Jews speak about different kinds of discrimination as well as friendships between two tolerant Muslim and Jewish families. *NIK Media*, The Netherlands. www.joodseomroep.nl

Day of Deliverance - Composed of footage showing the historic break-up for the DP camps of Germany following WWII, on the closing of the Cyprus detention camps, and on Operation Magic Carpet which brought the Jews of Yemen to Israel. By the *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee*. www.yivoinstitute.org

A Summer in La Goulette - A comedy that explores the complicated relationships in the Middle East. The place is *La Goulette*, a small Tunisian harbor town. The time is a few months before the 6-Day War in June 1967, a time when people of different religions in North Africa exist side by side. *Flach Pyramide Intl.* French with English subtitles. www.jhvc.org

Doda Diya - Diya, is a widow. She lives a simple life. She has waited 40 years to return to the Island of Djerba. It is her dream. She arrives in Tunisia and Djerba with hundreds of other Jews for a memorial event in celebration of a righteous woman. *Maale School of TV Film and Arts, Jerusalem.* Hebrew with English subtitles. mahale06@inter.net.il

Home - As a Baghdad-born Israeli family watch the live CNN images of the Gulf War on their television, the images of bombed-out Baghdad evoke potent memories of their Iraqi-Jewish past. *The Jerusalem Film & Television School.* (972) 2/731-950 / fax:(972) 2/731-949 www.jsfs.co.il

I Miss The Sun - Mary Halawani, the filmmaker, takes a look at the life of her grandmother, Rosette Hakim, who was born in Egypt. She uses the Pesach seder, which tells the story of the Hebrew's exodus from Egypt, as a symbol of her grandmother's exodus from modern Egypt. *National Center for Jewish Film* or (718) 858-4898. www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm

In The Beginning: Once Upon a Time... There Were Arab Jews - A story of Jews living in the Islamic world as neighbors with Moslems. The memories of 3 generations of a family now living in France, but from Laghouat, Algeria. They recall a Islamic Jewish culture where Jews and Muslims worked, studied and socialized together, and sought common ground in the Torah and the Koran. French and Arabic with English Subtitles; *Les Films d'ici*, films.dici@wanadoo.fr Tel: 33 1 4452 2323.

The Jews of Djerba [Tunisia] - This video explores the rich history and customs of this unique place. The Jews left Babylon over 2,500 years ago and were scattered over a wide geographical terrain. The Jewish community on this island sees itself as the remnant of an earlier congregation, and it claims to have the "Ghriba" stones from the Temple. *National Center for Jewish Film* www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm

Soleil - Professor Levy, a surgeon in Paris, suffers a heart attack in the opening scene of the film, and flashes back to his Algerian Jewish boyhood. Sophia Loren acts in the role of his mother, Mamma Titine. It is a beautifully shot, sentimental but occasionally splendid evocation of a WWII boyhood in a large Jewish family in Algiers. Mamma raised five children, while Papa worked in a Paris post office under a non-Jewish name. Meyer is her favorite, yet rebellious, child. In Vichy controlled Algeria, Meyer is expelled from school at age 13, but reinstated. *President Films*, 2 rue Lord Byron, Paris 75008, France, 011-33-1-45-628222

Braids - Based on a true story, Braids tells the tale of So'ad, a fourteen-year-old Jewish girl imprisoned by the Iraqi government in 1947 for her participation in the Zionist movement. The film illuminates a complex and sensitive period of Jewish life in Iraq when Jews felt their security threatened as antisemitism surfaced with the growth of Zionism. Jailed for three years, So'ad joined other political prisoners in a campaign of disobedience until Iraq opened its gates in 1950 and allowed Jews to emigrate to Israel. This program holds strong appeal for those interested in Sephardic culture. *Israel Educational TV*; National Center for Jewish Film www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm

Nana: Un Portrait - From her apartment in New York, eighty-year-old Louise Zilkha reviews the highlights of her life that began with a traditional Jewish upbringing in Baghdad. Zilkha reminisces about her youth, of playing Queen Esther and of her arranged courtship and marriage to a leading Middle Eastern banker. She talks about the often turbulent coexistence of Iraqi Jews and Moslems, and of the persecution and threats that led the family on a journey out of Iraq to Beirut, Cairo, and finally, New York. The film is at once a very personal portrait and a documentary tribute to a lost culture. *National Center for Jewish Film* www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm

Pillar of Salt - Based on the autobiographical novel by sociologist Albert Memmi, Pillar of Salt captures the cultural richness and social complexity of a Jewish boy's life in Tunisia, North Africa. Alexander, age 13, is an expressive and intelligent boy who sensitively responds to conflicting pressures from surrounding French and Arab societies. A rare opportunity to see the unique customs of Jewish life in Tunisia, including Sabbath dinner and Alexander's bar mitzvah. *National Center for Jewish Film* www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm

Return to Oulad Moumen - In south Marrakesh amidst the olive groves lies the village of Oulad Moumen where Habiba and Yossef Edery began their family in the 1920s. Director Genini, the youngest of the nine Edery children, organized a family reunion in 1992 to bring her family (now dispersed geographically and culturally) together in the place where it all began. 50 members of the family, came from Morocco, France, America, Canada, Mexico, Italy, and Israel to Oulad Moumen to learn of the dynasty's origins. Genini melds the family reunion with archival photos, giving both a personal view of a Sephardic family and a historical picture of Jewish-Arabic-Berber coexistence in Oulad Moumen. *National Center for Jewish Film* www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm