

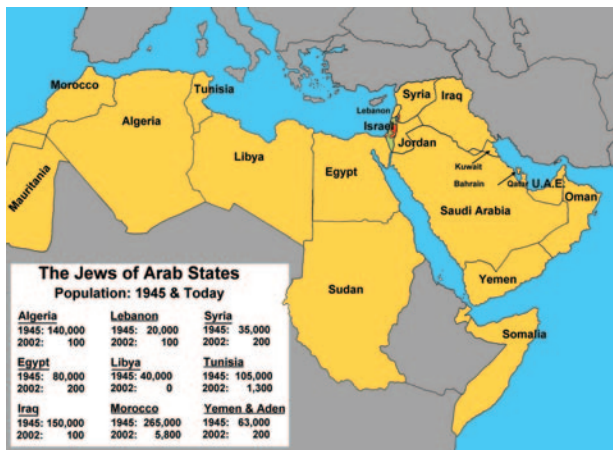


## ON: The Forgotten Refugees: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa

There has been an uninterrupted Jewish presence throughout the Middle East since the destruction of the first Temple in the sixth century BCE. Except for intermittent periods when Jews in Arab lands were able to contribute to their countries of residence, Jews have been persecuted in Arab lands since the birth of Islam in the seventh century. Jews, along with Christians, were known as dhimmis: second-class citizens who received some temporary measure of protection in exchange for subordination to their Muslim rulers. Among other discriminatory practices, Jews were forced to live in segregated quarters, wear distinctive clothing, and either embrace Islam or pay the *jizya* – a humiliating protection tax.

During the 20th century, in the wake of the formation of new Arab states and of Israel, Arab persecution of the Jews intensified. In most cases Jews were expelled en masse or compelled to flee.

Today, 99% of the ancient Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa no longer exist. Out of some 900,000 Jews who lived in Arab countries until 1948, only a few thousand remain. In some cases, such as Libya, Jews have completely vanished as a result of a campaign of expulsion spearheaded by Arab nationalists.



### Did you know that...

During the Palestine Partition debate at the United Nations in November 1947, the Egyptian, Iraqi and Palestinian delegates issued violent threats against the indigenous Jewish communities of the Middle East and North Africa.

These threats were carried out in the weeks and months after the 1947 Partition vote. Hundreds of Jews in Arab lands were massacred in government-organized rioting, leaving thousands injured and millions of dollars in Jewish property destroyed. During these expulsions, the Arab governments — most notably Iraq, Egypt, Libya, and Syria — confiscated property from the fleeing Jews worth tens of billions of dollars (in today's dollars).

While fending off six advancing armies during the War of Independence, the nascent state of Israel absorbed an estimated 600,000 Jews from Arab countries, nearly doubling its initial population, without any financial support whatsoever from the international community.

### Did you know that...

Just as Arabs suffered from displacement during the Arab-Israeli conflict, so too have the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa. The number of Jews from Arab countries who fled their homes is roughly equivalent to the number of Palestinian Arabs who fled Israel. Other conflicts have also resulted in a similar proportion of refugees on both sides. Approximately twelve million Muslims and Hindus became refugees upon the creation of India and Pakistan in 1948, and were quickly resettled.

### Did you know that...

UN Security Council Resolution 242 states clearly “the necessity for a just settlement of the refugee problem.” This formulation should be applied to all refugees, including the Jewish refugees from Arab states. Recognizing the Jewish refugees has long been overlooked but will be absolutely essential to any just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.