

For the forgotten victims of Hate at Israel's Birth, a Memorial

The Jewish Nakba



By Jerry Klinger

As the missiles of terror and death to the Jews crashed randomly into Israel without regard or concern for civilian life, a unique memorial, the first ever in the world and certainly Israel, was erected prominently sited on Jerusalem's Haas Promenade. It is a Memorial messaged that very few in the non-Jewish world, especially the Muslim world, know about. Unfortunately, too many in the Jewish world know little about it too.

The Memorial is formally titled the *Departure and Expulsion Memorial*. The title follows the theme of a long-overdue Knesset Law passed in 2014. The law requires the teaching of what happened to the Jews from Arab lands and Iran with the birth of Israel.

In 1948, there were over 1,000,000 Jews living in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen/Aden, and Iran. Today, in all of the Arab world and Iran, less than 10,000 remain. Jews had lived in these lands for over two thousand years.

With the birth of modern Israel, Jews in Arab lands and Iran were forced, compelled, threatened, "encouraged" to leave, too frequently on pain of death. They had to abandon their homes, property, businesses, and the resting places of

their families of generations and generations. They were never given the option of return, or compensation.

The Jews were ethnically cleansed from Arab lands and Iran.

Desperate Jewish refugees were not and are not wanted by the world. A few went to Europe, even a few to America. The only place in the world that wanted them, and wants them, is Israel.

Their story had not been mandatorily taught in Israel's schools which tended to be Ashkenazi centered, creating societal tensions. It is still not taught, peripherally at best, in World Jewry's Hebrew schools.

Until the 2014 Knesset law was passed there was no annual formal recognition of the Sephardi/Mizrahi experience. The Knesset law, spearheaded by MKs Shimon Ohayon of Yisrael Beytenu and Nissim Ze'ev of Shas established November 30 as the annual day of commemoration.

Professor Ada Aharoni is a past Chairwoman of the World Congress of the Jews from Egypt. She has been awarded the Israel President's Award by Shimon Peres for her Peace initiatives between Arabs and Jews. She was the first woman invited to speak at the Mahmood Mosque in Kababir, Haifa.

Dr. Aharoni, has called the horrific Sephardi/Mizrahi story *the Second Exodus, the Jewish Nakba*.

She quotes Eli Wiesel in her documentary Pomegranate of Reconciliation.

"Who is the enemy?"

The enemy is he whose story you do not know."

She continues, *"I know your story my Palestinian brother. But you do not know mine."*

Most Jews have heard about the Holocaust. Many non-Jews have heard about the Holocaust, though a larger and larger segment deny it happened, especially in the Arab world. They refuse to know the legitimacy of the Jewish story.

The Jewish Nakba is the counter-narrative to the politically weaponized one-sided story of the Palestinian Arab experience and the birth of Israel.

The Palestinian Arab experience at the birth of Israel was, also for many, traumatic, war always is. It involved fear, coercion, and threats by invading Arab armies to get out of the way or die with the Jews. A significant number of Palestinians absolutely refused to live in the United Nations partitioned Jewish state.

An estimated 650,000 Palestinians left expecting to return and feast on the properties and homes of the defeated Jews. They abandoned their homes, expecting to return once the seven invading Arab armies had exterminated the infant Jewish State.

To their horror, the Jews accomplished the impossible and defeated the Arab armies. The Palestinian refugees became potential fifth columnists and could not readily return to Israel. The Palestinian refugees, not wanted by their Arab brethren, were imprisoned by them in deplorable refugee camps. They were unrealistically promised the right of return with the future destruction of the Jews. The seeds of hate were nurtured.

The seeds of Arab hate for the Jew have grown with global, historical anti-Semitism's reemergence. It bursts out in repeated bloody explosions of violence and war to no one's benefit.

The absurdity of ignorance with the current explosion of Arab-Israeli violence is characterized by protests against Israel for defending itself. Israel is called an apartheid state, with no understanding of apartheid. Zionism is racism is falsely equated when 60% of Israelis trace their origins from Arab countries. A significant number of Israel's population is Black from Ethiopia and parts of Africa. And the classic antisemitic repackaged canard by "wokism" as the cause of the war, "Jewish Supremacy."

Israel does not defend its story well to the P.C. one-sided world.

The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation has long believed in the power of the silent sentinel. The silent sentinel is a permanent adjunct to education, to media, to print, to video, to the informational world of the net.

JASHP has long believed that permanent historical markers, memorials, and interpretive sculptures tell stories that can endure for many decades. The

electronic media is powerful. The electronic media can end when the electric bill is not paid.

JASHP recognized that though the Knesset had passed a law, the reach of the law teaching about the Sephardi/Mizrahi story was limited. Tourists who will come to Israel again in the millions will need to learn a more balanced side to the story of Israel. The electronic media will not provide a durable voice. A physical memorial was needed. None had existed.



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JASHP conceived and funded the Jewish Departure and Expulsion Memorial on the Haas Promenade. It was made possible by the significant support of the Mayor of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Foundation, and the World Sephardi Federation.

The sculpture is the interpretive work of famed Jerusalem sculptor, Sam Philipe. Philipe based his work upon the iconic photograph of Yemenite refugees making their way through the desert in 1947 to a Joint Distribution Committee Refugee Camp before continuing on to Israel.

The Memorial's text is simple and direct.

“With the birth of the State of Israel, over 850,000 Jews were forced from Arab Lands and Iran. The desperate refugees were welcomed by Israel.

By Act of the Knesset: Nov. 30, annually, is the
Departure and Expulsion Memorial Day.”

Recognizing and remembering the Sephardi/Mizrahi experience is an important step in commonality. Understanding the pain of the other is a major leap forward to thwart one-sided bigotry.

The Departure and Expulsion Memorial is a tool to be used to defend Israel against those who live in the blindness of hate.

It is a Memorial to work towards the mutuality of peace.