

The Camel's Neck

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Zero percent Jews in Syria. Zero percent Jews in Libya. Zero percent Jews in Iraq. One older Jewish man I know in Jerusalem described how, when his family fled Baghdad 50 years ago, he was traumatized by the sight of Jews hanged from utility poles in the streets. All of those countries that once had thriving Jewish populations are now Jew-free. Areas in Israel such as Jaffa, Hebron and Gush Etzion were made Jew-free by Arab conquest for various periods in the 20th century. There is a long history of massacres perpetrated against Jews by Arabs in the Middle East, but a short history of massacres committed by Jews. With all the talk of “ethnic cleansing,” the reality on the ground is quite the opposite of the accusation.

It is true, of course, that Arab and Bedouin Palestinians have experienced expulsions and “ethnic cleansings” throughout history – often at the hands of fellow Arabs or Muslims, as well as by Europeans. Many Arab villages in Northern Israel were wiped out by Bedouin raiders or Druze forces in the 19th century, including most of those on Mount Carmel and in the area of what is today Afula. Virtually the entire Arab and all of the Jewish population of Gaza were expelled by the Turks during World War I, although 80 percent later returned.

During Israel’s War of Independence (1946-48), some 750,000 Arab and Bedouin residents fled or were expelled

(official U.N. figure: 711,000), some by the urging of local Arab leaders, some by foreign Arab leaders, and some by local Jewish forces. Many of those persons bore greater or lesser responsibility for their fate. Some of them fled from areas that were at the end of the war under Arab, not Israeli, rule. The majority (over two-thirds) of these displaced

persons simply resettled elsewhere in Palestine by 1950. Israel had offered to settle an additional 100,000 Arab refugees at that time in the portion of Mandatory Palestine under its control, but the offer was declined by the Arab states. The majority of these displaced persons were tenants who suffered the tremendous trauma of dislocation, regardless of how the blame is apportioned.

After Yasir Arafat and his associated organizations came out publicly in favor of Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait (1990), some 400,000 ethnic Palestinians were expelled (i.e. “ethnically cleansed”) from Kuwait (1991). At least 20,000 ethnic Palestinians left or were chased from Iraq during the current war. In August 2009, the press reported that the United Arab Emirates planned to deport hundreds of ethnic Palestinians, particularly Gazans, in the coming weeks.

In contrast, Israel has not forcibly expelled Arabs since Rabin dumped (“deported”) 415 Hamas terrorists into Lebanon in 1992, but subsequently took them back under Israeli court order. (This does not count the expulsion of tourists with expired visas and



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