

Here's the essay from Ben-Dror Yemini. Presented in full:

## **The Jewish Nakba: Expulsions, Massacres and Forced Conversions**

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Each year, the Palestinians mark Nakba Day, the catastrophe that befell them with the establishment of the State of Israel. But the Jews in Arab countries also suffered catastrophe and it was many times worse.

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**They say that she was stunningly beautiful. Sol (Suleika) Hatuel was 17 years old when she was beheaded. A Muslim friend claimed that she had succeeded in converting her. When Sol denied the claim, she was accused of renouncing Islam and was condemned to death. Her case reached the sultan.**

**In order to prevent her death, the community elders tried to persuade her to live as a Muslim. She refused and said, "I was born as a Jew, I will die as a Jew." Her fate was sealed. It happened in 1834. She was from Tangier and was executed in Fez. Many make pilgrimages to her grave. Despite the fact that the incident was immortalized in eyewitness testimony, in a famous painting and in a play, her story has been forgotten. The following article is dedicated to her and to the victims of the Jewish Nakba.**

Every year on the 15th of May, the Palestinians - and many others around the world along with them - "celebrate" Nakba Day. For them, this is the day that marks the great catastrophe that befell them as result of the establishment of the State of Israel. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs became refugees. Some fled, some were deported. The Nakba grew to such enormous proportions that it is preventing a solution to the dispute.

We must remember that in the 1940s, population exchanges and deportations for the purpose of creating national states were the accepted norm. [Tens of millions of people experienced it](#), but only the Palestinians (and they are not alone in this) have been inflating the myth of the Nakba.

However, there is another Nakba: the Jewish Nakba. During those same years, there was a long line of slaughters, of pogroms, of property confiscation and of deportations against Jews in Islamic countries. This chapter of history has been left in the shadows. The Jewish Nakba was worse than the Palestinian Nakba. The only difference is that the Jews did not turn that Nakba into their founding ethos. To the contrary.

Like tens of millions of other refugees around the world, they preferred to heal the wound. Not to scratch it and not to open it and not to make it bleed even more. The Palestinians, in contrast, preferred bleeding to rehabilitation. And now they are also paying the price.

The industry of lies has intensified the myth of the Nakba and turned it into the ultimate crime. The Nakba has spawned innumerable publications and conferences, to the point of completely distorting the actual historical process. The Deir Yassin massacre has become one of the milestones in the Palestinian Nakba. There is no need to hide what occurred there (even though the issue of the massacre is in dispute). Innocent people were killed.

There were a few other instances of behavior that should be exposed and condemned.

### **Extermination War against the Jews**

A long series of massacres was perpetrated against the Jews in Arab countries. They did not declare war on the countries in which they lived. They were loyal citizens. That did not help them. Their suffering was erased. Their story is never told. The Palestinian narrative has taken over history. There is no need for a Palestinian narrative versus a Zionist narrative. We need to shake off narratives in favor of the truth. And the truth is the number of Jews murdered was greater, their dispossession was greater, and their suffering greater.

A stunning testimonial from those years, which actually comes from the Arab side, sheds light on the issue. In 1936, Alawite notables sent a letter to the French Foreign Minister in which they expressed their concern for the future of the region. They also referred to the Jewish question: *"The Jews brought civilization and peace to the Arab Muslims, and they dispersed gold and prosperity over Palestine without damage to anyone or taking anything by force. Despite this, the Muslims declared holy war against them and didn't hesitate to massacre their children and women ... Thus, a black fate awaits the Jews in case the Mandates are cancelled and Muslim Syria united with Muslim Palestine."* The interesting thing is that one of the letter's signatories was none other than the great grandfather of Bashar Al Assad, the president of Syria.

We must remember that Nakba Day is the date of the declaration of Israel's independence, May 15th . We must remember what happened just a few hours after that declaration. The Secretary of the Arab League, [Abdul Rahman Hassan Azzamaha](#), announced the declaration of war against Israel: "This war will be a war of annihilation and the story of the slaughter will be told like the campaigns of the Mongols and the Crusaders."

The Mufti, Haj Amin Al Husseini, who was close to Hitler during the Second World War, added his own bit: "I am declaring a holy war. My brother

Muslims! Slaughter the Jews! Kill them all!" The mini-Holocaust of the Jews in Arab countries.

Various documents, some of them discovered only in recent years, show that the declaration of war was far broader. It was actually a declaration of war on the Jews.

[Research](#) that was conducted, among others, by Prof. Irwin Cotler, former Minister of Justice of Canada, shows that the Arab League formulated a bill that would place a series of sanctions on the Jews, including confiscation of property, bank accounts and more. The preamble to the bill states that "All Jews will be considered members of the Jewish minority in the State of Palestine." And if the fate of the Jews of Palestine was sealed, the fate of the Jews in Arab countries was clear.

The bill was indeed the background to the sanctions against the Jews in Arab countries - sometimes by way of legislation, as happened in Iraq and later in Egypt, and sometimes by taking those measures without the need for any legislation. According to the industry of lies, the Jews in Arab countries lived peacefully in their environment, under the protection of the government, and it was only because of the Zionist movement and the harm done to the Arabs in Palestine that the Jews began to suffer.

This lie has been repeated innumerable times. Most of the Jews in Arab countries did not undergo the horrors of the Holocaust. But, even before the advent of Zionism, their situation was not any better. There were periods in which the Jews enjoyed relative peace under Muslim rule, but those periods were the exceptions. Throughout Jewish history in Muslim lands there were humiliations, expulsions, pogroms and a systematic deprivation of rights.

### **Series of Pogroms**

We can, of course, start with the conflict between Muhammad and the Jews. Muhammad undertook social reforms, bringing the Arabs out of the Jahaliya period, and borrowed the concept of monotheism - primarily, perhaps, from the Jews. Many motifs from the Jewish religion appear in the Koran, for example, circumcision and the prohibition on eating pork. But Muhammad wanted to convert the Jews, they, of course, refused. The result was a confrontation that ended in the expulsion and slaughter of hundreds.

The Jews, as the "People of the Book," were given the right to live under the protection of Islam and to practice their religion. From time to time, from generation to generation, the conditions underwent changes. In many cases, the Jews lived under the [covenant of Khalif Omar](#).

This covenant enabled them to live as protected people ("Dhimmis"), albeit with inferior status. But many times, under Muslim rule, they were not even allowed a life of inferior status.

**The Golden Age:** One of the proofs of the coexistence of Jews and Muslims is Jewish prosperity under Muslim rule in Spain and the Golden Age. The reality, however, was different.

It encompassed a [series of violence events](#) against the Jews. In 1011 in Cordoba, Spain, under Muslim rule, there were pogroms in which, according to various estimates, from hundreds to thousands were murdered. In 1066 in Granada, Yosef Hanagid was executed, along with between 4,000 and 6,000 other Jews. One of the worst periods of all began in 1148, when the Almohad dynasty came to power (al Muwahhidūn), and ruled Spain and North Africa during the 12th and 13th centuries.

**Morocco:** The country that suffered from the worst [series of massacres](#). In the 8th century whole communities were wiped out by Idris the First. In 1033, in the city of Fez, 6,000 Jews were murdered by a Muslim mob. The rise of the Almohad dynasty caused waves of mass murders. According to testimony from that time, 100,000 Jews were slaughtered in Fez and about 120,000 in Marrakesh (this testimony should be viewed with caution). In 1465, another massacre took place in Fez, which spread to other cities in Morocco.

There were pogroms in Tetuan in 1790 and 1792, in which children were murdered, women were raped and property was looted. Between 1864 and 1880, there were a series of pogroms against the Jews of Marrakesh, in which hundreds were slaughtered. In 1903, there were pogroms in two cities - Taza and Settat, in which over 40 Jews were killed.

In 1907, there was a pogrom in Casablanca in which 30 Jews were killed and many women were raped. In 1912, there was another massacre in Fez in which 60 Jews were killed and about 10,000 were left homeless. In 1948, another series of pogroms began against the Jews which led to the slaughter of 42 in the cities of Oujda and Jrada.

**Algeria:** A [series of massacres](#) occurred in 1805, 1815 and 1830. The situation of the Jews improved with the start of the French conquest in 1830, but that did not prevent anti-Jewish outbursts in the 1880s. The situation deteriorated again with the rise of the Vichy government. Even before 1934, the country was permeated by Nazi influences, which led to the slaughter of 25 Jews in the city of Constantine. When it achieved independence in 1962, laws were passed against citizenship for anyone who was not a Muslim and their property was effectively confiscated. Most of the Jews left, usually completely penniless, together with the French ("pieds noirs").

**Libya:** In 1785, hundreds of Jews were murdered by Burza Pasha. Under Nazi influence, harassment of the Jews intensified. Jewish property in Benghazi was plundered, thousands were sent to camps and about 500 Jews were killed. In 1945, at the end of World War II, a program against the Jews began and the number of murdered reached 140. The New York Times

reported the horrible scenes of babies and old people who had been beaten to death. In the riots that broke out in 1948, the Jews were more prepared, so only 14 were killed. Following the Six Day War, riots broke out once again and 17 Jews were slaughtered.

**Iraq:** a massacre occurred in Basra in 1776. The situation of the Jews improved under British rule in 1917, but this improvement ended with Iraq's independence in 1932. German influences increased and reached a peak in 1941 in the pogrom known as Farhud, in which 182 Jews were slaughtered (according to historian [Elie Kedourie](#), 600 people were actually murdered) and thousands of houses were pillaged.

Those were the days of Haj Amin al Husseini, who preached violence against the Jews. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the Iraqi parliament acted according to the Arab League bill and in 1950 and froze the assets of Jews. Sanctions were imposed on those who remained in Iraq. The Farhud massacre and the harassment from 1946 to 1949 to all intents and purposes turned the Iraqi Jews into exiles and refugees. The few thousand who remained in Iraq suffered from harsh edicts. In 1967, 14 Iraqis were sentenced to death on trumped up charges of espionage. Among them were 11 Jews. Radio Iraq invited the masses to the hanging festivities.

**Syria:** The first blood libel in a Muslim country occurred in 1840, and led to the kidnapping and torture of dozens of Jewish children, sometimes to the point of death, and a pogrom against the Jews. In 1986, the Syrian Minister of Defense, Mustafa Talas, published a book, "The Matzah of Zion," in which he claims that the Jews did, indeed, use the blood of a Christian monk to bake matzah. Same old anti-Semitism, new edition. Other pogroms occurred in Aleppo in 1850 and in 1875, in Damascus in 1848 and in 1890, in Beirut in 1862 and in 1874, and in Dir al Kamar there was another blood libel which also led to a pogrom in 1847. That year, there was a pogrom against the Jews of Jerusalem, which was the result of that blood libel. In 1945, the Jews of Aleppo suffered severe pogroms. 75 Jews were murdered and the community was destroyed. There was a resurgence of the violence in 1947, which turned most of the Syrian Jews into refugees. Those who remained there lived for many years as hostages.

**Iran:** There was a pogrom against the Jews of Mashhad in 1839. A mob was incited to attack Jews, and slaughtered almost 40. The rest were forced to convert. That is how the Marranos of Mashhad came into being. In 1910, there was a blood libel in Shiraz in which 30 Jews were murdered and all Jewish homes were pillaged.

**Yemen:** There were fluctuations in relations that ranged between tolerance and inferior subsistence, between harassment and pogroms. The Rambam's Letter to Yemen was sent following a letter he received from the leader of the Yemeni Jews, describing edicts of forced conversion issued against the Jews

(1173). There were further waves of apostasy edicts which cannot be detailed here for lack of space.

One of the worst milestones was the [Mawza exile](#). Three years after Imam Al Mahdi took power in 1676, he drove the Jews into one of the most arid districts of Yemen. According to various accounts, 60 - 75% of the Jews died as a result of the exile. Many and varied edicts were imposed on the Jews, differing only in severity. One of the harshest was the Orphans' Edict, which ordered the forced conversion of orphaned children to Islam. In nearby Aden, which was under British rule, pogroms occurred in 1947 which took the lives of 82 Jews. 106 of the 170 shops that were owned by Jews were completely destroyed. Hundreds of houses and all the community's buildings were burned down.

**Egypt:** As in the other Arab countries, the Jews of Egypt also suffered inferior status for hundreds of years. A significant improvement occurred when Muhammad Ali came to power in 1805. The testimony of French diplomat, Edmond Combes, leaves nothing in doubt: "To the Muslims, no race is more worthy of contempt than the Jewish race." Another diplomat added, "The Muslims do not hate any other religion the way they hate that of the Jews."

Following the blood libel in Damascus, similar libels began to spread in Egypt as well and incited mobs to carry out a series of attacks: in Cairo in 1844, 1890, and in 1901-1902; and Alexandria in 1870, 1882 and in 1901-1907. Similar attacks also occurred in Port Said and in Damanhur.

Later on, there were riots against the Jews at the end of World War II, in 1945, in which 10 were killed and hundreds were injured. In 1947, the Companies Law was passed, which severely damaged Jewish businesses and led to the confiscation of property. In 1948, following the UN resolution on partition, riots began in Cairo and Alexandria. The dead numbered between 80 and 180. Tens of thousands were forced to leave, many fleeing and abandoning their property. The lot of those who remained did not improve. In 1956, a law was passed in Egypt which effectively denied the Jews citizenship, forcing them to leave the country with no property. This was an act of pure expulsion and mass property confiscation.

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The above is just a partial list out of a long series of massacres in Muslim countries. It happened before the Zionist endeavor. It continued with the Zionist endeavor. We are talking about a succession of events. Tens of thousands were murdered simply because they were Jewish. So the fairytale of coexistence and blaming Zionism for undermining that coexistence is yet another completely baseless myth.

Before the UN vote on partition in November 1947, Egypt's ambassador to the UN, [Heykal Pasha](#), warned that *"The lives of a million Jews in Muslim countries will be in danger if the vote is for partition... if Arab blood is spilled in Palestine, Jewish blood will be spilled elsewhere in the world."*

Four days afterwards, the Iraqi foreign minister, [Muhammad Fadil al Jamali](#) said that *"We will not be able to restrain the masses in the Arab countries, after the harmony in which Jews and Arabs lived together."* There was no harmony. There had been a massacre of Jews just a few years earlier. El Jamali lied, of course. The very same Iraqi government had encouraged the harassment of Jews and issued orders to confiscate all Jewish property.

Additionally, the Iraqi leader of the time, Nuri Said, had already [presented a plan for expelling the Jews in 1949](#), even before the hasty - actually forced - exit of the Jews from Iraq. He also explained that "The Jews are a source of trouble in Iraq. They have no place among us. We must get rid of them as best we were able." Said even presented a plan to lead the Jews via Jordan in order to coerce them into passage to Israel. Jordan objected, but the expulsion was implemented anyway. Said even admitted that this entailed a type of population exchange.

So the massacres, the pogroms and the great expulsion of the Jews was a continuation of their suffering under Muslim rule. There have always been Muslims who came out in defense of the Jews. They are also worthy of mention. That were also periods of prosperity, but it appears that most of the Jewish prosperity, as in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s, in Algeria in the 19th and 20th centuries, in Iraq in the 1920s - was under colonial rule. In most cases, the situation of the Jews was bad before the European invasion and worsened once again with the end of the colonial era.

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Throughout the relations between Jews and Arabs, in Arab countries or in the course of the Zionist enterprise, there was not one case of a pogrom against Muslims of the type committed by the Arabs against the Jews. Even in the worst cases, which must be condemned, such as Deir Yassin, they occurred as part of a military confrontation.

Those are cases that should be condemned, but we need to put things in perspective. The Arabs slaughtered the Jews without any hostilities and without any military excuse, just because they were Jews. And those few Arabs who were killed, were killed as part of a military campaign. Despite this, any injury inflicted on the Arab population resulted in innumerable investigations and references. The worst abuse of all, the abuse of Jews by Arabs, was erased and forgotten.

Let's return to Deir Yassin, the ultimate symbol of the Nakba. We have called it an indecent act and we will repeat that. But we must note that it was

preceded by a series of murderous terrorist attacks against the civilian population. Waves of incidents, which to all intents and purposes were actual pogroms, by an incited mob that attacked the civilian population. Thousands of Jews were slaughtered - women, children and the elderly. The Palestinians even murdered their own people. In the great Arab Revolt in the 1930s, 400 Jews and 5,000 Arabs were killed, most of them at the hands of their brethren.

The months before Deir Yassin were the worst of all. 39 workers were murdered at the Haifa refineries, 50 Jews were killed by car bombs in Jerusalem, and on and on. In total, in the four months between the vote on partition and the declaration of establishment of the State of Israel, 815 Jews were murdered, most of them before the Deir Yassin incident (on April 9, 1948), some afterward (the slaughter of the Hadassah hospital convoy, 79 killed, April 13, 1948). Most were civilians. Most died in massacres and terrorist attacks. And that is the real background. Far more murdered Jews. But they have all been forgotten. They should be mentioned. That is the Jewish Nakba, whose victims, in Israel and around the world, are mentioned less and less.

### **The Palestinians paid the price**

Close to a million Jews lived in Arab countries at the time of the establishment of the State of Israel. Just a few live there today. Most left because they suffered from pogroms and the threat to their lives. It was a crueler expulsion than the one suffered by the Arabs of Palestine, who paid the price for the declarations of war and annihilation made by their leaders. Even the Jewish property that was confiscated or abandoned as a result of the expulsion is more valuable than the Arab property that remained in Israel.

Various investigators have tried to estimate the value of the confiscated Jewish property following the forced departure of the Jews from Arab countries, compared with the Arab property left in Israel following the forced departure of the Arabs. Economist [Sidney Zab Ludoff](#), an international expert in the field, estimates that the value of the Arab property is \$3.9 billion, compared with the value of the Jewish property which is \$6 billion (at 2007 values).

So even in this area, the Palestinians' claims are refuted. They dragged the Arab countries into war. They paid the price. And they are the ones who caused the Jews to pay an even higher price. Both in property and in blood.

This article is not intended to cultivate the Jewish Nakba, and it by no means includes all the cases of pogroms, property confiscations, forced conversions and other harassment. The purpose is precisely the opposite. When they understand, in the Arab world in general, and the Palestinians in particular, that suffering, expulsion, loss of property, the cost in lives, is not the

monopoly of one side, they may, perhaps, have the sense to understand that this past is a matter for history lessons. Because if we start to perform a political accounting, they have an overdraft. The Jewish Nakba was far greater. The suffering was enormous. But it is the suffering of many nations, Jews and Arabs among them, who went through the experience as part of the creation of new nation states.

It is therefore worth presenting the story of the Jewish Nakba. Not for the purpose of increasing the hostility, but for the purpose of presenting the truth, and for the purpose of reconciliation between the nations. Inshallah.