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London summit on Jewish refugees

Jewish groups from around the world are meeting in London to highlight the plight of Jews who left their homes in Arab nations after Israel was founded.



Conference organisers say inadequate attention is paid to Jewish refugees

The conference organisers, Justice for Jews, say they want to ensure the story of Jewish refugees is told, alongside that of Palestinians.

The American-based group says around 850,000 Jews lived in Arab nations before Israel was founded in 1948.

It says most were forced to flee due to hostility when Israel was created.

Justice for Jews, which campaigns for compensation for Jewish refugees from the Middle East, says the international community has always focused on Palestinian refugees and never given due attention to Jewish refugees.

The BBC's Arab affairs analyst Magdi Abdelhadi says the subject is highly controversial as the numbers of Jews who left, and the conditions under which they left, are disputed.

He says one undisputed fact is that Jews were part of Arab societies for centuries, where they were fully integrated in their societies, until Israel was established.

Some left because they were Zionists, others because of growing hostility towards them after the Arab-Israeli wars in 1948 and 1967, and there were also those who were encouraged to leave by the new Israeli state, our analyst adds.

He says not all of them went to Israel - many went to France and America, where some of them still feel very passionately about the Arab cultures they grew up in.

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