



## **Congress Passes First Ever Resolution on Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries**

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Prior to the adoption of H.Res.185, all Resolutions on Middle East refugees referred only to Palestinians. This Resolution affirms that the U.S. government will now recognize that all victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict must be treated equally. It further urges that the President and U.S. officials participating in Middle East discussions to ensure that any reference to Palestinian refugees must: “also include a similarly explicit reference to the resolution of the issue of Jewish refugees from Arab countries.”

The Resolution was introduced by Reps. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Joseph Crowley (D-NY) and Mike Ferguson (R-NJ). With the passing of this Resolution, Rep. Nadler stated, “We believe that as a member of the Quartet, and in light of the U.S. central and indispensable role in promoting Middle East ‘just peace’, the U.S. must reaffirm that it embraces a just and comprehensive approach to the issue of Middle East refugees.”

Rep. Joseph Crowley said, “The world needs to understand that it is not just the Arabs and it’s not just the Palestinians in the Middle East, but also Jewish people who themselves were dispossessed of their possessions and their homes, and were victims of terrorist acts. These are people who lived in Middle Eastern communities not for decades, but for thousands of years.” Rep. Crowley added that the Resolution will, “bring light upon an issue that has been swept under the carpet.”

“Discussions of Middle Eastern refugees invariably focus exclusively-and shortsightedly-on the plight of those of Palestinian descent,” said Rep. Ros-Lehtinen. “Far fewer people are aware of the injustice faced by Jewish refugees from Arab lands and Iran. Many Jews saw their communities, which had existed vibrantly for centuries systematically dismantled. They lost their resources, their homes, and their heritage sites, fleeing in the face of persecution, pogroms, revolutions and brutal dictatorships.”

Rep. Mike Ferguson said that there was very strong bi-partisan support for this issue which recognizes, “the plight of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who were displaced from countries in the Middle East, Northern Africa and all around the Persian Gulf.” Congressmen Ferguson acknowledged that the U.N. has never recognized Jewish refugees, and that this, “is completely unacceptable and long over due, and this is one of the things this Resolution seeks to address.”

Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice-President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations commented, “the failure during all these years to recognize other refugees, compounded the indignation and the suffering and the deprivation of Jews in Arab countries. There was a systematic process of expulsion which the Arab governments engaged in.” He added that the Resolution is not an obstacle to peace. “It is a distortion to talk only of one refugee population, as that would undermine the ultimate outcome of any negotiations. The Congressional action will educate a generation that know too little about the other refugees.”

The passing of this Resolution is the strongest U.S. declaration on the rights of Jewish refugees that were displaced from Arab countries. H.Res.185 underscores the fact that Jews living in Arab countries suffered human rights violations, were uprooted from their homes, and were made refugees.

Stanley Urman, Executive Director of Justice for Jews from Arab Countries stated that, “Congress has restored truth to the Middle East narrative, by recommending equitable treatment of all Middle East refugees. Only in this fashion can there be movement from truth to justice, from justice to reconciliation, and from reconciliation to peace - between and among all peoples and states in the region.”

Underscoring the importance of the Resolution, Rep. Nadler added, “When the Middle East peace process is discussed, Palestinian refugees are often addressed. However, Jewish refugees outnumbered Palestinian refugees, and their forced exile from Arab lands must not be omitted from public discussion on the peace process. It is simply not right to recognize the rights of Palestinian refugees without recognizing the rights of Jewish refugees.”