

INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS AND REDRESS CAMPAIGN



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LANDMARK RESOLUTIONS ON MIDDLE EAST REFUGEES INTRODUCED IN THE US SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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(Washington, D.C.) - May 30, 2006 – In an important initiative, four Senators and four Congressmen, representing both political parties, have introduced landmark Resolutions on Middle East refugees in the United States Senate (SR494) and in the House of Representatives (HR848).

These far-reaching Resolutions urge the President to ensure that in all international forums, when the issue of ‘Middle East refugees is discussed, representatives of the United States should ensure: “That any explicit reference to Palestinian refugees is matched by a similar explicit reference to Jewish and other refugees, as a matter of law and equity.”

The Resolutions will be the strongest declarations adopted by the U.S. Congress, acknowledging the rights of Jewish and others refugees that were forced to flee Arab countries. This bi-partisan effort is being spearheaded by Senators Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Norm Coleman (R-MN), as well as Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). On the House side, supporters include Congressmen Tom Lantos (D-CA) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) as well as Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Michael Ferguson (RNJ).

Currently, when the issue of refugees is raised within the context of the Middle East, the reference is only to Palestinian refugees, not former Jewish refugees from Arab countries. However, there were two major population movements that occurred during years of Middle East turmoil – Arabs and Jews. Both groups were determined to be bona fide refugees under international law. In fact, there were more former Jewish refugees uprooted from Arab countries (over 850,000) than there were Palestinians who became refugees in 1948. (UN estimate: 726,000)

JJAC is a coalition of Jewish communal organizations operating under the auspices of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the American Sephardi Federation and the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries. The International Rights and Redress Campaign is endorsed by dozens of Jewish organizations, including, among others, the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Congress, Bnai Brith International, JCPA, Central Conference of American Rabbis, United Jewish Communities, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, National Council of Young Israel, Hillel, Rabbinical Council of America, and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

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