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News

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Jews fleeing Yemen, 1949
Israel news photo: file

Jewish Refugees Demand Justice as Part of 'Arab Peace Process'

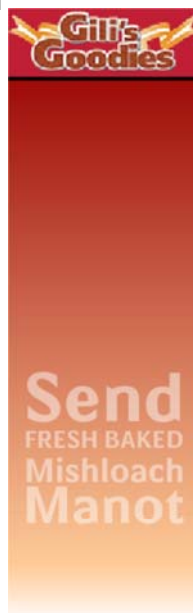
by Maayana Miskin

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(IsraelNN.com) Groups representing Jewish refugees from Arabs lands are increasing their efforts to pass a bill that would force the government to demand equality for Jews during peace talks. The proposal aims to bring the issue of compensation for Jewish as well as Arab refugees into the Middle East peace process.

Activists have been lobbying MKs in recent weeks in an attempt to raise the necessary support for the bill, which faces a second and third vote next week.

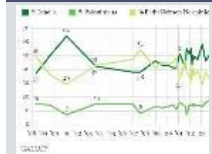
The proposal, created by MK Nissim Zev of Shas, would require the government to raise the issue of Jewish refugees when negotiating Arab demands regarding Arabs who fled pre-state Israel during the War of Independence. Any time the subject of Arab refugees is raised in negotiations, the Israeli government must raise the question of compensation for Jews forced to flee their homes, according to the bill.



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"The State of Israel will not sign, either directly or by proxy, any agreement or treaty with a country or authority dealing with a political settlement in the Middle East without ensuring the rights of Jewish refugees from Arab countries according to the U.N.'s refugee treaty," the bill states.

The proposal passed an initial hearing in December but faces opposition from the Justice Ministry.

Jewish activists from Arab states have expressed anger over the government's opposition, particularly in light of the fact that the United States Congress passed a similar measure in 2008. The U.S. decision requires American officials involved in Middle East peace talks to refer to the issue of Jewish refugees when the issue of Arab refugees is discussed.

"America passed a measure respecting our rights, but in Israel the government opposes it?" one activist said in frustration.

At a Knesset [conference last week](#) many Israelis born in Arab lands recalled being forced to abandon their homes and other property and to flee for their lives.

The total number of Jews forced to flee their homes in Arab lands is estimated at close to one million – far more than the number of Arabs who claim they were forced out of Israel during the War of Independence. Jewish groups say that

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whatever compensation is given to Arabs whose families once lived in Israel, more should be given to Jews from Arab lands, who on average lost more land and property.

Arab advocacy groups reject that claim, and say Arabs who define themselves as refugees deserve more compensation due to their suffering over the course of the past several decades. While Jews who were expelled from Arab lands found a home in Israel, Arabs who fled Israel were not accorded similar treatment in Arab states, and instead were forced to reside in "refugee camps" for generations.

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2. Jewish Refugees from Arab Lands

Bruria, (02/22/10)

1. Arab Refugees

a settler, northern Israel (02/22/10)

The banner is a vertical teal rectangle. At the top, it features the 'Nefesh B'Nefesh' logo in white Hebrew and English. Below this, the words 'ALIYAH MEGA EVENT' are written in large, bold, yellow capital letters. Underneath, the text 'INFORMATION RESOURCES BOOTHS WORKSHOPS' is listed in white capital letters. The date 'Sunday March 14' is displayed in white. A dark blue button with the text 'CLICK TO REGISTER' in white is positioned below the date. At the bottom, there are two logos: the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption logo and the Jewish Agency for Israel logo, both in white.

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